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**In the Shadow of Night: Sleeping and Dreaming and Their Technical Rôles in Shakespearian Drama**

by

Filip Bul Krajník

This thesis aims to demonstrate the variety of ways in which sleep and dreams are employed in Shakespeare's dramatic canon. Using a historical perspective, the work primarily examines the functions of these motifs within the design of the plays: how they contribute to the structure and unity of the works, how they assist in delineating some of the individual characters, and how they shape the atmosphere of specific dramatic situations. This kind of analysis requires an understanding of the cultural and intellectual contexts in which the fictitious representations of these phenomena were originally written and received. For this reason, the present thesis also offers a historical and cultural background, outlining the social character of the phenomena of sleep and dreams in early modern England and the history of their employment in pre-Shakespearian literature. Where relevant, the use of these motifs in the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries is also studied.

The Introduction to the thesis summarizes the current state of knowledge of the topic and defines the present author's approach to the research question. The first chapter discusses dream literature as a genre, its themes and development before Shakespeare's time. The second chapter analyses the dramatic functions of a sleeping character on the stage in Shakespeare's drama and how this image developed from the dramatist's early plays to his later and more mature works. It examines how the motif affects the image of the character in question, but also how it influences the immediate dramatic context. A special section is devoted to the topos of dreams and its use as a characterization device. The third chapter deals with fictitious dream prophecies and their technical functions in Shakespeare's plays. Again, the chapter follows the motif from the early stages of Shakespeare's dramatic career to his last plays, trying to determine both its staple functions and changes in its employment. The last chapter addresses the dramatic image of the night as a time in which sleeping and dreaming – but also other typically dark enterprises – occur. A special section is devoted to Shakespeare's use of the death-as-sleep metaphor and its dramatic implications.

**Sub umbra noctis: Somnus, somnia eorumque munera technica in dramatibus Shakesperii**

Scripsit
Philippus Bul Krajník

Hisce rebus perscrutandis discatur quomodo somnus somniaque in dramatibus Gulielmi Shakesperii variis in modis adhibeantur. Imprimis harum rerum munera in ludis theatricis componendis per methodum historiam respiciendi examinantur: quanta pars iis in ludorum ordine unitateque comittatur, quemadmodum personas depingi iuvent et quantam vim singulis dramatum momentis afferant. Contextum et culturalem et intellectualem, in quo haec phaenomena ab origine scripta erant atque accipiebantur, intellegere ad tale inspectionis faciendae genus necesse est. Quamobrem in opere quoque rerum historia et eius temporis res culturales, quae ad rem pertinent, perhibentur, quo fundamentum status socialis in Anglia non diu postmedievali usumque horum phaenomenorum in litteris ante Shakesperium scriptis spectare possimus. Etiam de operibus haec continentibus tractatur eorum auctorum, qui eadem aetate ac Shakesperius vivebant.

In praescriptio huius thesis, quo usque temporibus nostris scientia huius thematis pervaserit, disseritur et quem in modum auctor de iis rebus accedendis senserit scribitur. Capitulum primum litteras somniis inspiratas genus novum perspicit earumque evolutionem et modos scribendi praecipuos aetatis ante Shakesperium natum describit. Capitulum secundum fines dramaticos personarum in proscaenio in ludis Shakesperii dormientium perscrutatur huiusque rei evolutionem a primis auctoris operibus usque ad ea plus matura examinat. Quantum momentum hic motivus ad personam in opere scriptam afferat porro perspicitur pariter ac quemadmodum eadem re contextus continuo afficiatur. Articulus proprius τοπωι somniorum ut instrumento describendi datus est. Capitulum tertium de prophetiis fictis in somniis factis atque eorum muneribus in ludis Shakesperii scribit. Iterum hic motivus a Shakesperii operibus primis usque ad posteriora spectatur, ut quid saepissime sibi is motivus in ludis velit et quomodo munus eius gradatim mutetur, noscatur. In capitulo postremo noctis species dramatica tempus dormiendi somniandique depingitur et porro species aliorum eventuum atrorum, qui huic proprii sunt. Articulus proprius somno a Shakesperio adhibito velut mortis metaphorae significationibusque drammaticis deditus est.

# In the Shadow of Night: Sleeping and Dreaming and Their Technical Rôles in Shakespearian Drama

**by**

**Filip Bul Krajník**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

**Department of English Studies**
**Durham University, 2013**

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## Acknowledgements

The present dissertation has emerged from a research project which began in 2008, during my studies at the English Department at Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic. In 2008, I published an article entitled "'To Sleep, Perchance to Dream…': Sleeping and Dreaming in Shakespeare"[1] and, a year later, submitted a Master's Thesis at Olomouc entitled "'When Will This Fearful Slumber Have an End?': Dramatic Roles of Sleep and Dream in Shakespeare's Plays", which both utilise the initial findings of my inquiry into the subject of sleep and dreams in Shakespeare's dramatic works. Although the present study has, to an extent, grown out of my Olomouc thesis (whose length is about 25,000 words, as opposed to the 100,000 words of my doctoral dissertation) and there might be instances of overlaps between the two texts, the present dissertation has significantly revised and extended the original argument, with new work emerging from my intensive study of the subject over the past three years at Durham.

Like any acknowledgements section prefaced to any work, this one, too, is doomed to be least pertinent to the reader, but most personal to the author. It is also destined to be hopelessly dry and incomplete, since condensing a four-year experience onto a couple of pages is nearly impossible. Yet I feel obliged to immortalise the names of at least some of the people to whom I am most indebted and without whose help the writing of this thesis would have been a much more difficult and much less pleasant task to undertake.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to both of my supervisors, Dr. Robert Carver and Dr. Barbara Ravelhofer, for the suggestions and assistance (and occasional pastoral care, which, as the time went, was more and more necessary) with which they provided me for more than three years. I know that working with me was not always the easiest job to do. I would also like to thank to Professor Pavel Drábek, whose lecture on the second part of *Henry VI* years ago inspired me to study dreams in Shakespeare and whose seminars on Renaissance literature, Shakespeare and drama were always a sheer pleasure to attend. I also have to mention Dr. David Livingstone, the supervisor of my Master's Thesis on sleep and dreams in Shakespeare, who encouraged me to pursue a PhD in England.

During the work on this dissertation, countless people were always available to listen to me, give me their opinion and help me with a number of issues, both small and large. A huge *thank you* goes especially to Dr. Jana Kolářová for her support and

[1] Filip Krajník, "'Spát! Snad mít i sny…': Spánek a sen v Shakespearovi", *RozRazil* 3: 2 (2008): 69–72.

invaluable help in the field of classical philology, and Matthew Nicholls, who has generously overseen significant portions of this work and most of the papers I have ever given.

Writing this thesis would have been even more difficult without the friends I made in Durham, who were willing to listen to my ceaseless complaints about my work and life. The people who made my doctoral studies more bearable were, in particular, Kate, Betsy, Pete, Christian, Ilán, Gurdeep, Ted, James and Rachel, and, of course, Rupert and Christine, who were the nicest landlords all that time. Of these, a special thanks goes to Christian, who was willing to spend nights with me over some ridiculously unscholarly works of German literary criticism.

I cannot express how deeply I am indebted to my parents, without whose support the pursuit of my doctorate at Durham would simply not have been possible. Thank you. A special thanks also goes to Martin, for being my big brother, and Vlaďka, for being there.

My deepest gratitude, however, belongs to Anna – *so ynly swete a sweven, so wonderful that never yit y trowe no man had the wyt to konne wel my sweven rede*. Without her, this world would be a much sadder place.

For Anna.

*Mea uoluptas, mea delicia, mea uita, mea amoenitas,*
*Meus ocellus, meum labellum, mea salus, meum sauium,*
*Meum mel, meum cor, mea colustra, meus molliculus caseus.*

(Titus Maccius Plautus, *Poenulus* 1. 2. 365–67)

# Introduction

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.
(*The Tempest* 4. 1. 156–58)[1]

The motifs of sleeping and dreaming permeate Shakespeare's dramatic writing from the earliest stages of his career as a playwright. Prophetic dreams and characters sleeping on stage can already be found in Shakespeare's first historical plays, written at the time when he was predominantly either adapting older works, or collaborating with more established and mature authors. Over the next twenty years, when he formed his identity as a dramatic author and firmly established himself among the leading theatrical practitioners of the country, Shakespeare continued making use of these tropes in his plays, right up until his retirement from London around 1613. Of the thirty-seven dramas, generally accepted as part of the Shakespeare canon, significant references to (or direct presentations of) dreaming are to be found in more than half. When, on 6 May 1954, at the annual meeting of the American Association of the History of Medicine in New Haven, Simon B. Chandler delivered a paper on the representation of sleep experience in Shakespeare's dramatic works, he counted more than 60 significant references to sleep, ranging in length from a few to as much as twenty-five lines.[2] We might, therefore, say that sleep and dreams were among Shakespeare's favourite dramatic images and that Shakespeare himself was one of the most consistent users of these topoi in the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic era.

It is only logical and appropriate then that deployments of these motifs in Shakespearian drama have not remained unnoticed by literary criticism and, over the course of the past century or so, have been the subject of a number of studies. As early as 1860, when Dr. John Charles Bucknill, fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and a superintendent at a lunatic asylum in Devonshire, published *The Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare*, he pointed out that "[t]here are few subjects that Shakespeare has treated with more pathetic truthfulness than the distress arising from want of sleep", effectively suggesting a direction in which Shakespeare criticism, decades later, would proceed.[3] The

[1] If not indicated otherwise, all quotations from Shakespeare's work are drawn from *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2008).

[2] The paper was subsequently published as "Shakespeare and Sleep" in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 29 (1955): 255–60.

[3] John Charles Bucknill, *The Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1860) 193. Although, for the twenty-first-century reader, Bucknill's volume remains little more than a bizarre historical artefact, a fairly recent article in the medical journal *Neurology*, commenting upon Shakespeare's

diversity of the critical treatment of the subject can be demonstrated in the comments, made over the course of more than eighty years, upon one of the most notorious Shakespearian dreams, namely that of Hermia in Act 2, Scene 2 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Upon her awakening in the middle of the enchanted forest, Hermia finds herself awe-struck by her recent oneiric experience and decides to confide its content to her (absent) beloved, Lysander: "Methought a serpent ate my heart away, / And you sat smiling at his cruel prey" (2. 2. 155f). While, at the beginning of the twentieth century, one of the pioneers of the criticism of Shakespearian dreams classified Hermia's uncanny vision as a fairly standard misfortune-announcing prophecy, which signalises the pain which Hermia is going to suffer in her love,[4] about six decades later, another literary historian decided to submit the dream to a Freudian analysis, maintaining that it reveals to the audience Hermia's sexual frustration and that the character "transforms the forbidden phallus into a serpent".[5] Thirty years later, another critic analysed the episode from the perspective of Jungian categories of telepathic experience and archetypes, considering the dream as an immense and monstrous primordial experience ("als gewaltiges und ungeheuerliches Urerlebnis"), and the image of the serpent as an archaic symbol of a female.[6] Around the same time, however, yet another opinion held that, in order to understand the symbolism of the dream, one simply has to open mediaeval and humanistic dream interpretation manuals and see what they had to say about the dream of serpents.[7]

As we can see, interpreting a dramatic dream can be as difficult as reading a real one, and no judgement of it can be taken as the only true and definitive exposition (although one has to admit that a discussion of oneiric phenomena without at least one reference to a phallus would be reprehensibly incomplete).

The first attempts to cover the subject of sleeping and dreaming in Shakespeare (and pre-modern and early modern English literature in general) from the viewpoint of literary

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descriptions of sleeping and dreaming from the position of modern medicine, proves the merit of this particular observation. See Yuri Furman, Sheldon M. Wolf and David S. Rosenfeld, "Shakespeare and Sleep Disorders", *Neurology* 49 (1997): 1171–72.

[4] See Max Arnold, *Die Verwendung des Traummotivs in der englischen Dichtung von Chaucer bis auf Shakespeare* (Kiel: H. Fiencke, 1912) 17.

[5] M. D. Faber, "Hermia's Dream: Royal Road to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", *Literature and Psychology* 22 (1972): 179–90 at 182–83.

[6] See Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel, *Die Traumtheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts und die Träume der Figuren Shakespeares. Mit einem Abriss philosophischer und literarischer Traumauffassungen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992) 138–41.

[7] See Peter Holland, Introduction, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 1–117 at 8–9.

criticism were the dissertations of Max Arnold and Jürgen Stuve, published in 1912 and 1913 respectively.[8] Written at a time when the psychoanalytical approach to literature had not yet become mainstream, both studies focus on the functions of dreams in specific fictitious situations (such as an announcement of misfortune, an announcement of fortune, receiving a task in a dream etc.), without, however, saying much about the rôles of literary dream-sequences within the overall design of the works in which they appear. Neither Arnold nor Struve do systematically observe the motif of dreaming from the point of view of its development as a genre and, apart from several generalising remarks (such as the observation that the dream-frame was a flourishing literary form in the Middle Ages),[9] the reader is left with little more than a list of references to dreaming in literature of the period in question. Both authors, however, agree that representations of dream phenomena in early literature were heavily influenced by contemporary beliefs of authors and their original audiences, and that the cultural and social contexts of the time shaped the literary representation of real-life phenomena, which, subsequently, contributed to the shape of these contexts in return.[10]

Another significant contribution to the discussion of sleep and dreams in Shakespeare appeared in 1942 as a doctoral dissertation by Bain Tate Stewart on the Renaissance concept of dreams and its representation in Elizabethan drama.[11] Stewart, to a large extent, adopts the view of Carroll Camden, who had claimed that proper understanding of the Elizabethan intellectual context was a duty that "falls doubly upon us who would make the attempt to interpret the art of Shakespeare".[12] The main objective of Stewart's work is thus a partial reconstruction of late mediaeval and early modern dream-lore, which was largely based on Aristotelian teaching, and the analysis of specific dramatic works is generally limited to illustrations of cases of this lore's permeation through the sphere of fiction. Although he gave little consideration to the literary merits of employing oneiric topoi in early modern drama, Stewart accurately recognised two main types of dreams that were used by English Renaissance dramatists: 1) those giving some insight into the psychology of dramatic characters, and 2) ominous dreams, revealing in some way the future advancement of the plot. In the 1950s and 1960s, Stewart transformed

[8] Max Arnold, *Die Verwendung des Traummotivs*; Jürgen Struve, *Das Traummotiv im englischen Drama des XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1913).

[9] See Max Arnold 70.

[10] See Struve 16. It should be noted here that Struve's work has an identical structure (including the same chapter-titles) to Arnold's, so the authors' similar views of most of the issues are not incidental.

[11] Stewart uses the term "Elizabethan" in its broadest possible sense, that is, for all English drama up to 1642. See Bain Tate Stewart, "The Renaissance Interpretation of Dreams and Their Use in Elizabethan Drama", Diss. Northwestern U, 1942.

[12] Carroll Camden, Jr., "Shakespeare on Sleep and Dreams", *The Rice Institute Pamphlets* 23 (1936): 106–33.

the main theses of his dissertation into two independent articles, each discussing one of these two classes of dream and its use by Elizabethan dramatists.[13]

Around the same time, the first studies appeared acknowledging sleep and dreams in Shakespearian drama not just as manifestations of early modern belief, but also as technical devices, contributing to the play's dramaturgical plane. Aerol Arnold's "The Recapitulation Dream in *Richard III* and *Macbeth*"[14] focuses on how dream sequences effectively contribute to the unity of the plays (or, in the case of *Richard III*, the dramatic saga) under investigation, and help to show qualitative contrasts between some of their characters. Robert K. Presson's study, "Two Types of Dreams in the Elizabethan Drama, and Their Heritage: Somnium Animale and the Prick-of-Conscience",[15] published about a decade later, discusses the rich literary and historiographical tradition of addressing dreams and how Shakespeare managed to transform older sources into powerful characterisational devices across his canon.

From the 1960s onwards, however, literary critics also showed increasing interest in the experience of sleep in Shakespeare, not only as an objective phenomenon, but also as a metaphorical designation of any subconscious, irrational or imaginative process, sometimes including the realm of drama as a whole. Although literary history had been aware of this possible double meaning of the word "dream" long before its discussion became so fashionable,[16] an (more or less acknowledged) alliance with a Freudian or post-Freudian psychoanalytical approaches to literature won the concept of dream as metaphor a prevalence in this particular segment of Shakespeare criticism.

As early as 1970, Manfred Weidhorn (author of the entry "Dream" in *The Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*)[17] criticised the application of psychoanalytical methods to early literature, saying that "[t]he Freudian approach to literary works has been much used and abused", and expressing the opinion that "the psychoanalysis of dreams should be handled by professionals only and confined to the coach and clinic".[18] Yet the

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[13] "The Misunderstood Dreams in the Plays of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries", *Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt UP, 1954) 197–206; "Characterization through Dreams in the Drama of Shakespeare's Day", in *Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler*, ed. Richard Beale Davis and John Leon Lievsay (Knoxville: The U of Tennessee P, 1961) 27–34.

[14] *Shakespeare Quarterly* 6 (1955): 51–62.

[15] *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 7 (1967): 239–56.

[16] In his brief historical survey "Dreams in English Literature" (*London Mercury* 27 [1933]: 516–23), Geoffrey Tillotson talks about a "perversion of meaning" of the word "dream" in nineteenth-century literature, explaining that it is frequently considered as "an experience comparable to that of smelling a rose half drowsily and for a long time". As he concludes, this meaning, however, is "quite unconnected with a bed" (Tillotson 516).

[17] See Manfred Weidhorn, "Dream", in *The Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, Vol. 1 (New York: Greenwood, 1988) 406–14.

[18] Manfred Weidhorn, *Dreams in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 8.

later part of the twentieth century witnessed several substantial studies drawing heavily upon this approach.[19] In particular, Marjorie Garber's *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (1974)[20] made frequent use of Freudian concepts (such as the theories of displacement and rejection, the subconscious, and the strong sexual connotations of dreams) and focused on dreams not in their literary sense, but rather as "creative energy and imagination, a transforming and transcendent state of mind which leads the dreamer toward a moment of renewed self-awareness".[21] In 1992, Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel dedicated a book-length study to an analysis of dreams in Shakespeare exclusively based upon twentieth-century dream theories.[22] Perhaps more than any previous work, Hammerschmidt-Hummel's study shows the weaknesses of such an approach: it fails to introduce in any depth the climate of dream-beliefs in and before Shakespeare's time (assuming that they do not constitute any significant portion of dream-lore in Shakespeare's drama) and studies Shakespeare's works completely outside their cultural, intellectual and literary contexts.

Furthermore, recent criticism has aimed at a fuller understanding of dreams as a cultural concept in the Renaissance.[23] Thus Carole Levin's *Dreaming the English Renaissance: Politics and Desire in Court and Culture*[24] collects early modern dreams dealing with religion, sexuality and royalty to illustrate their cultural significance in the period. Two major studies have significantly illuminated the intellectual context of Renaissance dreaming: a chapter on the epistemology of sleep in Stuart Clark's study of

[19] Apart from these, there have been several essays and articles discussing individual plays of the Shakespeare canon, for instance Norman N. Holland's "Hermia's Dream", originally published in *The Annual of Psychoanalysis* 7 (1979): 369–89, and subsequently reprinted in Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn, eds., *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1980) and in Carol Schreier Rupprecht, ed., *The Dream and the Text* (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1993); Garrett Stewart's "Shakespearean Dreamplay", published in *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981): 44–69; and Kay Stockholder's "The Protagonist as Dreamer: The Dead Father in *The Merchant of Venice*", originally published in *Dreaming: Journal of the Association for the Study of Dreams* 1 (1991): 75–90 and reprinted in Rupprecht, ed., *The Dream and the Text* (as "Dreaming of Death: Love and Money in *the Merchant of Venice*").

[20] New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1974. To the same category, we may tentatively add John Arthos's *Shakespeare's Use of Dream and Vision* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), which is not concerned with objective dreams at all and uses the term to designate metaphysical visions (for instance, a vision of love in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*) and the power of imagination.

[21] Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare*, ix.

[22] *Die Traumtheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts und die Träume der Figuren Shakespeares*.

[23] These, however, largely cover the topic of the history of dreaming rather than how dreaming was theorised in the period, for instance the collection of essays *Reading Dreams: The Interpretation of Dreams from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (ed. Peter Brown, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), which contains a chapter on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Kathryn Lynch and Peter Holland's overview of early-modern dream-beliefs; or another collection *Reading the Early Modern Dream: The Terrors of the Night* (ed. Katharine Hodgkin, Michelle O'Callaghan and S. J. Wiseman, New York: Routledge, 2008), approaching the subject from cultural-historical and literary-historical perspectives and partly addressing the question of the use of sleep and dreams in Elizabethan fiction.

[24] New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

early modern sight, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture*,[25] and Angus Gowland's essay investigating melancholy and dreaming in the context of humanistic medical discourse.[26] Even so, a full-length analysis of early modern drama in light of these recent approaches still remains to be done.

The present discussion of the motifs of sleeping and dreaming in Shakespeare's dramatic canon approaches the topic with three main objectives: 1) to analyse the employment of these tropes as technical devices, determine their functions within the design of individual dramatic situations and the plays' *sujets*, and observe the parallels and differences in their uses across Shakespeare's dramatic career; 2) to reconstruct the main features of the cultural, social and intellectual contexts of humanistic dreaming and to consider the plays as products of this milieu; 3) to place, where relevant, Shakespeare's treatment of the motifs in a broader literary situation and compare it with treatments of other early modern English authors, whose works may have influenced – or may have been influenced by – Shakespeare's writings. These tasks, combined with the historical approach and the fact that the project's remit is to examine the whole of Shakespeare's dramatic canon, rather than a narrow segment of it (such as a specific play or creative period), will enable the present thesis to provide a fuller understanding of the topic in the context of the new research questions which have emerged in recent scholarship.

Various critics in the past assigned various meanings to the term "dream" and the denotation of "sleep" in the context of Shakespearian drama is not as straightforward and unambiguous as one might expect either. It is, therefore, appropriate first to determine the semantic scope of "sleeping" and "dreaming" with which this thesis will deal. For the purposes of the present discussion, the primary meaning of both concepts is "objective sleep experiences". For Elizabethan and Jacobean audiences, sleep represented a special state in which man was simultaneously close to death and the divine, and prone to dangers coming from both himself and the world around him. Sleep was also the time when the faculty of human reason was suspended and replaced by the rule of enigmatic, uncontrollable images that might be a source of some special knowledge (divine or not). As we shall see, Shakespeare and his contemporary playwrights were aware of the special

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[25] Stuart Clark, "Dreams: The Epistemology of Sleep", in *Vanities of the Eye: Visions in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 300–28.

[26] Angus Gowland, "Melancholy, Imagination, and Dreaming in Renaissance Learning", in *Diseases of the Imagination and Imaginary Disease in the Early-modern Period*, ed. Yasmin Haskell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 53–102. I am grateful to Dr. Gowland for sending me the typescript of his essay, which was, at the time of the completion of the present thesis, inaccessible to me.

connotations of sleep experiences, and were able to make use of them for shaping the atmosphere and design of their works.

Quite frequently, however, Shakespeare added to sleep and dreams an additional layer of meaning: when, for instance, the newly crowned King Henry V rejects his old companion Falstaff, he refers to his youthful follies as a dream; when Hamlet wants to express his most intimate doubts about the rotten nature of Denmark, he, too, talks about nightmares which he has recently been having; and when the Danish Prince, later on, contemplates the afterlife, he talks about death as sleep and heaven and hell as dreams. The present discussion will take these metaphorical uses into consideration, explaining their cultural and literary origins and establishing their rôles within individual plays.

Chapter One, “Sleep and Dreams in Literature before Shakespeare”, will offer a brief history of the employment of sleeping and dreaming in fiction from the earliest stages of written literature up to the late sixteenth century. The discussion will necessarily be selective, only focusing on the main tendencies of the genre in order to illuminate Shakespeare’s achievement in the dramatic delineation of sleep and dream, and, especially towards the end of the chapter, emphasising the use of the phenomena in English works.

The second chapter, “The Sleeping Character – Characterising the Sleeper”, will address the topos of the sleeper and dreamer as a dramatic image, as well as its development and functions in Shakespearian drama.[27] From the most famous cases of Desdemona in *Othello* and Innogen in *Cymbeline*, the chapter will trace the trope back to Shakespeare’s earliest dramatic pieces. As we will see, an increasing deftness in the device’s use is discernible throughout Shakespeare’s dramatic oeuvre, spanning all genres, beginning with the murder of Duke Humphrey in the second part of *Henry VI*, and ending with a death-bed vision of Queen Katherine in *Henry VIII*. It will also become apparent that, apart from characterising the sleepers, the image is also indicative of the fictitious worlds which these sleepers inhabit.

Having summarised pre-modern and early modern attitudes to dreams, the discussion will also show that a correlation between dreams and the dreamer’s personality was an accepted piece of knowledge in the age of Shakespeare, which gave dramatists of the period an effective instrument to provide the audience, in an easy and economical form, with more information about dramatic characters, their aspirations, temperament, and inner thoughts.

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[27] Although there is a fairly recent monograph on sleep in Shakespeare’s plays, it does little more than comment upon isolated instances of sleep in Shakespeare and does not attempt any systematic dramaturgical inquiry into the use of the motif. See Marcus Noll, *An Anatomy of Sleep: Die Schlafbildlichkeit in den Dramen William Shakespeares* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1994).

Chapter Three, “Dream Prophecies: Daily Speech, Nocturnal Knowledge”, moves the focus of the thesis closer to plot. Having outlined the centuries-long history of ambivalent Western attitudes towards dreams (specially the prophetic ones), the analysis will go on to describe how Shakespeare and his contemporaries turned this problematic cultural status of dreams into a dramatic device. No attempt has hitherto been made at a systematic description of dramatic dreams, especially with regard to Shakespeare’s later plays; the present author will try to redress this here.

The final chapter, “Nocturnal Life in Shakespeare”, will widen the analysis to a consideration of the concept of Night and its presentation in Shakespearian drama. In the early modern period, night was connected with sleeping and dreaming, not only through classical mythology (considering Night as the mother of both), but also through its potentially dual and unfathomable character: just as sleep can be both a benefactor and danger for a person, and just as dreams can influence a person’s fate in both a positive and negative manner, so the night – the prime stage of sleeping and dreaming – can both protect and bring a person to his doom. The discussion will show that night-time significantly influences the dramaturgical plane of early modern plays, shaping their atmosphere and often raising certain kinds of expectation in their audiences. The second part of the chapter will explore Shakespeare’s use of the death-as-sleep metaphor, and its possible interpretations by early audiences and readers – a subject which has not been sufficiently covered by previous Shakespeare scholarship.

Using a historical approach, as outlined in the previous paragraphs, the entire discussion will primarily focus on what the phenomena under consideration were understood to be by early modern dramatists and the first recipients of their works. Although we have acknowledged some legitimacy for psychoanalytical methods in the analysis of literary dreams (which seem to have been the dominant way of considering literary dreams in recent decades), it is the belief of the present author that the historical approach is the most appropriate method for an investigation of a Renaissance writer’s deliberate work with these motifs. Therefore the interpretative framework for this study will primarily be based on an array of pre-modern and early modern writings and the rich literary tradition which existed when Shakespeare entered the realm of drama. The milestones of that tradition will be marked in the first chapter of the present study.

# 1 Sleep and Dreams in Literature before Shakespeare

> Aucunez genz dient qu'en songes
> n'a se fables non et mençonges;
> mes l'en puet tex songes songier
> qui ne sont mie mençongier,
> ainz sont aprés bien aparant[.][1]

> (Many men say that there is nothing in dreams but fables and lies, but one may have dreams which are not deceitful, whose import becomes quite clear afterward.)[2]

> (*Le Roman de la Rose* ll. 1–5)

## 1. 1 The *Epic of Gilgamesh*: First Literary Dreams

The history of written accounts of sleep and dreams in the form of belles-lettres is as old as the history of written literature itself. In the earliest surviving work of fiction, the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (twenty-first century BC), we can find a number of incidents connected with sleeping and dreaming, which prefigure the employment of these tropes in literature of the ancient and (later) Christian West. When the eponymous central character of the story confides to his mother a double dream of a star from the heavens that has fallen just in front him,[3] and an axe lying in the centre of the square of Uruk, surrounded by the town's inhabitants,[4] his reports are in fact the earliest examples of symbolic dreams used as a literary device, since both oneiric experiences prepare the audience for the arrival of the King's later comrade and friend, Enkidu. For the first time in history, the reader (or, rather, the listener) is also presented with the motif of a dreamer oblivious to the true meaning of his dreams, who is in need of somebody to interpret them for him.

Another – five-fold – dream appears to Gilgamesh at a crucial point in the hero's quest, just before he and Enkidu are to face the monster Humbaba. Having arrived at the Cedar Mountain, Gilgamesh bids the hill to "bring [him] a dream, so [he] see[s] a good sign".[5] The dreams which Gilgamesh sees are, however, "an utter confusion",[6] "ominous",

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[1] Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy, 3 vols. (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, 1965–1970).

[2] Translation from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1971).

[3] See *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation*, trans. Andrew George (London: Penguin Books, 1999) 10 = tablet 1, ll. 246–58. All references are to this edition. Indications of restored passages or insecure decipherments have, for the sake of lucidity, been removed.

[4] See *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 11 = tablet 1, ll. 276–85.

[5] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 30 = tablet 4, l. 9.

"desolate" and "unclear".[7] Although the text of their contents is poorly preserved, it is obvious that all of the dreams are warnings of some kind, dissuading the couple from further advancement in their quest. In one of the dreams, "heaven cried aloud, while earth did rumble. / The day grew still, darkness came forth, / there was a flash of lightning, fire broke out".[8] Enkidu, however, maintains that the "dream is a good omen, the dream is precious and bodes [them] well",[9] soothing Gilgamesh with a favourable interpretation of his uncanny visions.

The subsequent development of the plot proves Enkidu's predictions false, which has major consequences for the story. The monster is killed, but the way in which Enkidu spurned the dream warnings has offended the gods and the King's friend is struck by a mysterious illness.[10] Enkidu's destiny is revealed by means of two nightmares: in the first one, Enkidu dreams of an assembly of gods, who decide that Gilgamesh's companion has to die,[11] while the second one is the earliest surviving eschatological vision in literature.[12] In the second dream, Enkidu is abducted by a grim-looking man and dragged to Irkalla (the underworld), presented as the House of Dust, "whose residents are deprived of light, / where soil is their sustenance and clay their food, / where they are clad like birds in coats of feathers, / and see no light, but dwell in darkness".[13] Having heard Enkidu's extraordinary report, the awe-struck Gilgamesh, whose turn it is now to expose his friend's dreams, remarks, "My friend saw a vision which will never be equalled!"[14]

Although, after Enkidu's death, only one more literary dream occurs in the poem,[15] the key-theme of sleeping continues to pervade the rest of the plot in more a subtle – and ingenious – way. Mourning his friend's death, Gilgamesh asks a question crucial to the subsequent advancement of the plot: "Now what is this sleep that has seized you?"[16] Gilgamesh sets out in search of the immortal Uta-napishti, in an attempt to learn the secret of death in a similar fashion to the way he had previously pursued the secrets of dreams.[17] At the end of a long and complicated journey, he finds the immortal, who tells him the story of how he gained the eternal life and suggests that Gilgamesh go without sleep for six

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[6] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 31 = tablet 4, l. 22.
[7] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 37 = tablet $Ha_1$, l. 3.
[8] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 33 = tablet 4, ll. 101–103.
[9] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 31 = tablet 4, ll. 28f.
[10] I am relying on Kelly Bulkley's interpretation of this particular event of the plot. See Kelly Bulkley, "The Evil Dreams of Gilgamesh", in *The Dream and the Text*, 159–77 at 165.
[11] See *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 55 = tablet 7, lacuna between ll. 1 and 37.
[12] See *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 59–61 = tablet 7, ll. 165–208.
[13] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 61 = tablet 7, ll. 187–90.
[14] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 62 = tablet 7, l. 253.
[15] See *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 70 = tablet 9, l. 13.
[16] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 65 = tablet 8, l. 55.
[17] See Bulkley 165–66.

days and seven nights. The King, however, fails immediately and “sleep like a fog already breathe[s] over him”.[18] Uta-napishti remarks that a man who cannot defeat Sleep can hardly defeat Death. The sleep which overpowers Gilgamesh is very symbolic: when the King wakes up seven days later and realises his failure, he maintains that “A thief has taken hold of [his] flesh! / For there in [his] bed-chamber Death does abide, / and whenever [he] turn[s], there too will be Death”.[19] Sleep is thus presented as a phenomenon germane and natural to mankind, defining men’s mortality and being, as it were, a form of Death itself.[20]

A longer summary of at least some of the most important points of the plot was necessary to demonstrate the extraordinarily rich array of sleep and dream motifs in this early work. Almost a millennium and a half before the first pieces of epic poetry were committed to writing in the West, the oneiric phenomena had been recognised as a powerful literary device and techniques existed to employ them ingeniously in the structure of a fictional plot. Dreams were able to raise the audience’s expectations and foreshadow ensuing events. The motif of the misunderstood dream, which, as we will demonstrate, was one of the commonplaces of Shakespearian drama (see Chapter 3 of the present study), had a power to produce suspense and gave the listener some crucial pieces of information, to which the literary characters remained oblivious. Enkidu’s false interpretation of Gilgamesh’s prophecies, establishing his guilt and justifying his ultimate death, can be read as a precursor of the later use of dream phenomena in delineation of fictitious characters. For the first time, the quality of sleep is explicitly mentioned as well: while Gilgamesh, who has so far suffered from ominous dreams and nightmares, is, upon slaying Humbaba, finally allowed to enjoy a peaceful rest,[21] Enkidu suffers from bad dreams, which announce the divine sentence upon him. Sleep and dreams can, therefore, be both of beneficial and malignant character.

Finally, the connection between sleep and dreams and the notion of the afterlife suggests that the models for fictitious representations of sleeping and dreaming in the works of the time were not purely literary conventions, but real-life philosophical and

[18] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 96 = tablet 11, l. 211.

[19] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 97 = tablet 11, ll. 244–46.

[20] In the additional twelfth tablet of the epic, Enkidu returns from the netherworld “like a phantom” to reunite with Gilgamesh (l. 87). As Oppenheim stresses, the original Akkadian term *zaqīqu* (“storm”, “spirit”, “daemon”, “nothingness”) is used elsewhere in the poem as a designation for a dream (or, rather, the god of dreams). This suggests the kinship between spirits of the departed and dreams in the Mesopotamian tradition and corroborates the connection between the notions of sleep and death in the original culture of Gilgamesh. See A. Leo Oppenheim, “The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East”, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (New Series) 46 (1956): 179–373 at 234–35.

[21] See *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 54 = tablet 6, ll. 180f.

cultural commonplaces.[22] In other words, to understand fully the employment and subsequent reception of literary dreams of the period, a reconstructed intellectual context might be of significant help.

## 1. 2 Dreams in Homer

The pioneer in using sleep and dreams as a literary device in Western literature was, of course, Homer (eighth or seventh century BC). Since individual situations from both of his epic poems are going to be referred to during the discussion of specific deployments of the topoi later on in the present study, let us just make a few general observations about Homeric treatment of the themes. As William Stuart Messer observes, just as in the Mesopotamian poem, dreams in the oldest Greek epic, the *Iliad*, tend to occur at critical points in the plot.[23] The dream which Zeus sends to Agamemnon at the beginning of Book II, urging the King to attack Troy and take the city,[24] is a first step towards his atonement for the wrong done to Achilles, and also a prime motivation for the series of battles described by the poem. In Book X, Diomedes slaughters the Thracian king Rhesus "as the man gasped in sleep, nightmare upon him [κακὸν γὰρ ὄναρ κεφαλῆφιν ἐπέστη, lit. 'for an evil dream stood over his head']".[25] Although the nature of the dream remains unrevealed, it marks an important moment, when an oracle declaring that Troy cannot be taken once the horses of the Thracian king have fed upon Trojan grass, is forestalled. Book XXIII contains the first instance of an apparition of a dead person in a dream in Western literature, namely that of Patroclus, who prophesises to Achilles that he, too, will die beneath the walls of Troy, and expresses a wish that his ashes be contained in a common urn with Achilles's.[26]

In all these cases, dreams are presented as mythological figures rather than states of the sleeper's mind. They are objective, external entities sent by gods, or, as in the case of Patroclus, phantoms temporarily returning from the dead. Their employment in the story seems to be less elaborate than in the Akkadian epic, where dreams take upon the form of fully developed allegories, but even here they function as an effective literary device: they are a source of special knowledge, motivating the action of the story or establishing the

[22] See Oppenheim.

[23] The discussion of dreams in Greek epic and tragedy is partly based on William Stuart Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (New York: Columbia UP, 1918).

[24] See Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, 1974 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 18–19 = 2. 1–34.

[25] Homer, *The Iliad*, 177 = 10. 496.

[26] See Homer, *The Iliad*, 397–98 = 23. 62–107.

grounds for the ensuing development. Their presence at crucial points in the plot also stresses the concept of ancient deities and the Unseen as a directing principle in human life.

In the slightly later *Odyssey*, a development in the topos is discernible: after two non-allegorical, objective dreams appearing at the time of crisis (in the first, Penelope is visited by a wraith in the form of her sister Iphthime, which gives her courage about the Queen's absent son;[27] in the second, Princess Nausicaa is visited in her sleep by the disguised Athena, who bids her to go to the shore so that she may help the shipwrecked Odysseus),[28] a dream appears to Penelope, in which her twenty geese are killed by an eagle. When Penelope mourns the loss, the eagle returns and explains to her that he is her husband Odysseus and the geese were Penelope's suitors. Although Penelope does not believe that the dream will be fulfilled, her report, in fact, faithfully suggests the impending slaughter of the Queen's suitors and the restoration of Odysseus to his home in Book XXII.[29] The tension thus rises between the knowledge of the listening audience, who know the identity of the stranger at the court and interpret the dream as a hint at the solution of the story, and the ignorance of one of the story's central characters. Messer asserts that the use of an allegorical dream in the structure of the plot is surely a product of a later technique, but at the same time points out the poet's "lack of familiarity" with the handling of the device, which forced him to couple the first, allegorical part of the dream with an objective interpretation.[30]

Besides the employment of the motif of a dream, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* work systematically with the concept of sleeping. According to Homer, sleep is sweet (γλυκύς, ἡδύς, γλυκερός), deep (νήδυμος), soft (μαλακός), ambrosial (ἀμβρόσιος), sweet to the mind (μελίφρων), gentle and balmy (ἀπήμων καί λιαρός), the all-subduer (πανδαμάτωρ), but it can also be cruel (σχέτλιος) and pitiless (νηλής). On the one hand, Penelope, mourning her missing husband, praises sleep as a sweet period of oblivion;[31] on the other hand, there are clearly situations when this oblivion is undesirable: when, in Book X, Odysseus sails to Ithaca, having his homeland in sight, "beguiling sleep [γλυκὺς ὕπνος]"[32] surprises him, leading to the bag of winds being untied by his shipmates and their ship brought back to the open sea. Similarly, when, in Thrinacia, the

[27] See Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Walter Shewring (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) 53–54 = 4. 787–841.
[28] See Homer, *The Odyssey*, 67–68 = 6. 13–51.
[29] See Homer, *The Odyssey*, 240–41 = 19. 509–81.
[30] Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 52.
[31] See Homer, *The Odyssey*, 245 = 20. 80–85.
[32] Homer, *The Odyssey*, 213 = 10. 31.

gods pour “sweet sleep [γλυκὺς ὕπνος]”[33] on Odysseus’s eyelids, the hungry crew slaughter the cattle of the Sun. As a punishment, Odysseus’s ship is destroyed as soon as it sets sail and all his men drown.[34] Besides its unquestionably beneficial effects upon the characters, forgetfulness originating in sleep can thus also become a structural device, creating a dramatic occasion for a complication of the plot.

### 1. 3 Dreams as a Technical Device in Greek Tragedy

The shift from what Plato (424–348 BC), in his *Republic* (c. 380 BC), calls διήγησις (“pure narrative”) to what he terms μίμησις (“representational narrative”), which took place in the newly appearing dramatic genre in the sixth century BC,[35] did not diminish the authors’ interest in dreams as a technical component of their works. As Messer stresses, even in the absence of an omniscient narrator, who, in epic poetry, could provide the audience with a straightforward and detailed account of the origin, character, significance, and veracity of literary dreams, dreams in drama (having often the source in the same μῦθος as narrative genres) “are in essence the same as their prototypes in some other department”.[36]

It would be false, however, to suppose that dramatic poets simply adopted a form typical of a different medium without any amendments. When discussing the differences in the use of dreams in ancient and classical drama and other traditional literary genres, John Barker Stearns argues that “there is a wider field for the use of such technique in the narrative epic than in the drama”.[37] Stern supposes that an established element of an older literary category, which had centuries to refine its form, cannot simply be transplanted into another and retain all of its functions and elegance. Such an observation, however, largely overlooks the ability of a new genre to adapt and re-fashion older motifs and devices to suit its specific needs. Natural limitations of “representational narrative” could, on the contrary,

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[33] Homer, *The Odyssey*, 213 = 12. 338.

[34] See Vladimír Mikeš, “Spánek ve starém Řecku”, *RozRazil* 3: 2 (2008): 23–24 at 23.

[35] See Plato, *Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994) 87–90 = 392c–394e. Cf. *Poetics* (c. 335 BC) by Aristotle (384–322 BC), where the author distinguishes poetic arts according to the means of representation, the objects they represent and the manner (τροπός) in which they represent (1447a). Aristotle’s discussion of the manner corresponds to Plato’s distinction between pure and representational narrative, “[f]or in representing the same objects by the same means it is possible to proceed either partly by narrative and partly by assuming a character other than your own – this is Homer's method – or by remaining yourself without any such change, or else to represent the characters as carrying out the whole action themselves” (1448a). (Aristotle, *The Poetics*, in *Aristotle*, Vol. 23, ed. G. P. Goold [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982] 1–118.)

[36] Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 57.

[37] John Barker Stearns, *Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama*, diss. Princeton University, 1924 (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster P, 1927) 12.

be seen as an advantage, motivating the growth and gradual change of traditional devices, enriching their versatility and giving them fresh meaning.

The earliest dramatic poet known to use dreams as a technical device was Aeschylus (c. 525–c. 456 BC). Even his oldest surviving tragedy, the *Persae*, uses the motif of a dream in an ingenious way. At the beginning of the play, the chorus informs the audience about the Persian King Xerxes's massive military campaign to Greece, worrying about the possible outcome. After this introduction, Xerxes's mother, Atossa, enters the stage, telling the chorus that she has been haunted by dreams of the night (νυκτέροις ὀνείρασιν) since the King's departure (ll. 175f).[38] She proceeds to give account of her most recent vision: in her sleep, the Queen saw two sisters, one in Persian, the other in Doric (*i.e.*, Greek) attire, having an argument. To calm the women down, Xerxes yoked them to his chariot. Whereas the Persian sister stooped, the Doric one tore the harness and dragged the chariot so violently that Xerxes fell on the ground. Then the spectre of Xerxes's father, King Darius, appeared, pitying his son. At the sight of the ghost, Xerxes tore the robes covering his body (ll. 181–199). Having finished the story of her dream, Atossa mentions that, when she was about to perform the rites at the temple to avert evil, she saw an eagle (the king of birds) being attacked by a hawk (an inferior species).

The chorus suggests that the Queen ask the gods and the dead about the meaning of the prophecies, hoping for a positive interpretation (ll. 215–25). At this point, a messenger enters to inform everyone of the destruction of both the Persian naval and territory forces in the battle, not forgetting to mention that the King, upon seeing the disaster, tore his robes in grief (l. 468). The Queen laments how the "clear dream vision of the night [νυκτὸς ὄψις ἐμφανὴς ἐνυπνίων] […] very plainly […] revealed these disasters to [her]" and accuses the chorus, claiming that "in interpreting the dream, [they] took it far too lightly" (ll. 518–20). Summoned by the Queen, the ghost of Darius rebukes his son's decision to build a bridge over the Hellespont for the army, which provoked the anger of the gods. At the end of the play, Xerxes arrives in rags, lamenting the great loss of many young Persian men.

Despite being a very early dramatic piece, the *Persae* shows a remarkably sensitive use of the dream as a structural element of the plot. In the expository speech, the chorus establishes the central crisis of the play: the audience learn about the important campaign with an uncertain outcome. Although no earthly army can beat the Persian one, the

[38] Aeschylus, *Persians*, in *Aeschylus*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Alan H. Sommerstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008) 1–137.

possibility remains that the gods will intervene against the oriental soldiers. The subsequent dream preludes the answer to the pressing question as to the result of the battle. Despite being an allegory, Messer argues that “no one of the audience could fail to grasp the import of the figure”.[39] The woman in Doric attire is a poetic representation of Europe, whereas the one in Persian clothes stands for Asia. Since the play deals with one of the most important episodes from the history of the ancient world, the allegory was transparent to the original spectators and – unlike the fictitious characters on the stage – they could easily decipher its message. This anticipation is validated upon the entrance of the messenger.

Now the question arises why the powerful Persian army, vastly outnumbering its opponents, was defeated. The answer is provided by the spectre, whose appearance is again anticipated (and dramatically motivated) by the dream. It informs the King’s council (the chorus) and the Queen about Xerxes’s arrogance in trying to alter “the divine stream of Bosporus” (l. 746), which returns to the chorus’s initial notion that – despite his earthly power – no “mortal man can escape the guileful deception of a god” (ll. 93f). The dream is thus, as it were, the guiding principle of the plot, assisting in its evolution and ensuring its artistic unity. At the same time, it provides the spectators with foreknowledge, which heightens dramatic suspense and raises their attention. The development of the trope from Homer to Aeschylus is easily discernible: no dream from the Homeric canon shows this level of sophistication and dramaturgical effectiveness.

Instances of dreams being the motivation of the plot are scattered throughout the Aeschylean canon, proving that the motif quickly rooted in the repertoire of ancient drama’s devices and enjoyed substantial popularity among both dramatic poets and their audiences. In *Prometheus Bound*, for instance, we witness a long dialogue between Prometheus and Io (the latter transformed into a cow), which establishes Zeus’s despotism, but also demonstrates Prometheus’s sympathetic attitude to mortals. The scene thus significantly contributes to the characterisation of the central character of the play. In the conversation, it is also revealed that Zeus will be overthrown by his own offspring (l. 768) and that Prometheus will be released by Io’s descendant in the thirteenth generation (l. 774).[40] None of this would be possible, were it not for a series of “nocturnal visions [ὄψεις ἔννυχοι]” (l. 645), which visited Io and upon whose basis Inachus banished his daughter from his house, ultimately enabling her encounter with Prometheus. The dream in *Prometheus Bound* thus (albeit indirectly) assists in the delineation of a dramatic character

[39] Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 65.
[40] Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, in *Aeschylus* I, 432–563.

and illuminates his motivation – the factors which are necessary for an understanding of the play.

In *Libation-Bearers*, we learn about Clytemnestra's "clear prophetic dream [ὀνειρόμαντις]" (l. 34)[41] of her giving birth to a serpent, which subsequently sucks blood from her breast (ll. 527–33). The vision predicts Orestes's matricide and the account of it, given by his sister Electra and the chorus, provides a crucial motivation for Clytemnestra's son to take action. In the sequel, *Eumenides*, Clytemnestra returns in the form of a ghost and rebukes the sleeping Furies on the stage for not pursuing Orestes (ll. 94–139).[42] That the episode, which moves the Furies to pursue Orestes to Athens, is meant to be a dream and not an ordinary visitation from a ghost, is explicitly stated by one of the goddesses, who mentions the reproach coming to her "in [her] dreams [ἐξ ὀνειράτων μολὸν]" (l. 155). For the first time, we can thus see a visual representation of a dream episode on stage. Although, from the formal point of view, the furies' oneiric experience is a very traditional one (cf. Patroclus's visit to Achilles in Homer), the scene was immensely popular among the ancient Greeks, having been several times copied and imitated by later dramatists.[43] The popular early modern ghosts, appearing on the stage both to sleeping and waking characters (see the discussion in the following chapters), can be considered as remote heirs or descendants of this – originally Aeschylean – device.

Of other Greek dramatic poets who contributed to the growth of the dramatic dream, we can mention Sophocles (497–406 BC), who, in his version of *Electra*, lets Clytemnestra be visited by "some midnight terror [δεῖμα νύκτερος]" (l. 410).[44] The terror later on proves to be a dream of her late husband Agamemnon's staff, growing a fruitful bough, which overshadowed Mycenae (ll. 417–25). Although, as Messer stresses, the vision (unlike Aeschylus's dream of the serpent) has little impact upon the development of the plot, it brings together Electra and Chrysothemis, whose subsequent dialogue gives the audience an insight into Clytemnestra's motivation for killing her husband and makes the Queen's character dramatic.[45] Once more, we can see the importance of the motif of a dream in classical drama not only for the machinery of the plot, but also for delineating its individual characters.

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[41] Aeschylus, *Libation-Bearers*, in *Aeschylus*, Vol. 2, ed. and trans. Alan H. Sommerstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2008) 208–351.

[42] Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, in *Aeschylus* II, 254–485.

[43] See Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 74–75.

[44] Sophocles, *Electra*, in *Sophocles*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994) 165–321.

[45] See Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 81.

This rôle of the dramatic dream is also exploited by Euripides (c. 480–406 BC), who, in his *Hecuba*, introduces the ghost of Polydorus, appearing in dreams to his mother. In its introductory speech both for Hecuba and the audience, the apparition summarises the circumstances of Polydorus's violent death and predicts the finding of his corpse and the death of his sister Polyxena (ll. 1–58).[46] When Hecuba, upon the ghost's departure, leaves her tent, she laments, "O lightning-splendour of Zeus, O mirk of the night, / Why quake I for visions in slumber that haunt me / With terrors, with phantoms [δείμασι, φάσμασιν]?" (ll. 68–70) Although Hecuba's dreams prove to be prophetic – a fact allowing us to ascribe to them the conventional function of foreshadowing the plot – the position of their summary at the very beginning of the play, and the Queen's desperate comment which follows, first and foremost introduce Hecuba's inner life, giving the spectators an understanding of her misery and the motives for her subsequent revenge.

Perhaps the most developed and impressive use of a dream in ancient drama can be found in Euripides's *Iphigenia in Tauris*. In her prologue, the eponymous heroine of the play recounts the story of her sacrifice and how she, having been saved by Artemis, became a priestess at the temple of the goddess in Tauris. The exposition of the status quo of the play opens with the Princess crying to heaven the content of "the strange visions [φάσματα] that the night hath brought" (l. 42):[47] in her sleep, Iphigenia saw herself sleeping in her family's palace in Argos. Suddenly, an earthquake woke her and she managed narrowly to escape the destruction of the building. When she turned back, she saw only one pillar of the structure standing. Then the pillar grew blond hair and started speaking in a human voice, upon which the Princess, weeping, sprinkled it as a victim for a ritual sacrifice (ll. 44–55). Instantly, Iphigenia confides her interpretation of the dream to the audience: Orestes, the last member of her family, is dead (ll. 56–58).

As the audience know and as it is proved by the subsequent appearance of Orestes before the temple, Iphigenia's interpretation is false. We can therefore see an elaboration upon the previous uses of allegorical dreams of uncertain significance. Neither Atossa, Io, nor Clytaemestra is aware of the meaning of their visions of the night and they either consult oracles or perform rites to avert evil. In the case of Iphigenia's dream, a moment of misinterpretation is added, which leads to a potential catastrophe. When two Hellenes are brought to the temple to be sacrificed, she decides to show no pity for them, since "from

[46] Euripides, *Hecuba*, in *Euripides*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. Arthur S. Way (London: William Heinemann, 1912) 243–349.

[47] Euripides, *Iphigenia in Taurica*, in *Euripides*, Vol. 2, ed. and trans. Arthur S. Way (London: William Heinemann, 1912) 279–409.

dreams whereby [her] heart is steeled" (l. 348). At this point, a moment of strong dramatic irony is introduced: mourning the death of her brother – allegedly announced by her dream – Iphigenia is unable to recognise Orestes standing before her and is ready to perform the same rites upon him which the dream presented as the cause of his death. As in the previous cases, the allegory is now crystal clear to the audience, while remaining undeciphered by the characters on the stage. Since neither of the siblings is aware of the identity of each other at this stage of the development of the plot, the spectators are left to see whether the play will result in a tragedy or whether Iphigenia's initial misinterpretation of her dreams will be repudiated. As we will see later on in the present discussion, it is precisely this model situation that gives fictitious dreams in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries most of their dramatic potential and makes them a powerful technical device.

### 1. 4 Virgil's *Aeneid*: Dreams in Latin Epic

Drawing upon the Greek tradition, both Latin narrative and dramatic genres maintained dreams as a literary device, preserving all the essential functions which we described in the previous sections. Since it was predominantly Latin works that influenced mediaeval and early modern authors, it was through the writings of Roman poets that the tradition of oneiric phenomena as an effective technical device was preserved, transmitted and further refined.

In epic poetry, dreams continued to provide the essential motivation for the development of the story – a rôle well known from Greek narratives. Similarly to Homer's poems, in the most influential epic written in Latin, the *Aeneid* of Virgil (70–19 BC), the motif plays a significant part. Unlike in Greek epic, however, where dreams are of a more or less episodic character, Virgil incorporates them into the structure of his plot in a more ingenious way, letting them guide the entire plot and complement each other.

The first occurrence of the motif is in Book II, when the ghost of Hector appears to the eponymous hero of the story in his sleep (*in somnis*)[48] at the critical point when the Achaeans have broken into the city of Troy. The spectre warns Aeneas against the commencing gore and bids him to flee Troy with his family and "seek for them the mighty city, which, when [he] [has] wandered over the deep, [he] [will] at last establish" (2. 294f). The dream has an immediate effect on the plot (saving Aeneas's life), but it also reveals to

[48] Virgil, *Aeneid* (Books 1–6), in *Virgil*, Vol. 1, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999) 261–597.

the hero his future destiny and exposes the main argument of the work. The command to escape and set out on a journey is, not much later on, reiterated by the apparition of Venus, who also assures her son of the divine blessing of his mission (2. 589–621). No allegory (something we observed in Greek drama or the later of the two Homeric poems) takes place here: the dream primarily serves as a frame for the supernatural intervention, a kind of *deus ex machina*, which – by definition – is meant to be straightforward and primarily motivate the advancement of the narrative material.

Of a similar nature is Aeneas's second dream, taking place in Book III. Aeneas settles in Crete and starts building a new city, when the "sacred images [*effigies sacrae*]" of the Penates appear to him in his sleep (3. 148), informing him that Apollo does not wish him to build a new home in Crete, but in Hesperia (ll. 147–71). The image of Aeneas as the one chosen to found Rome, outlined already by Hector in the first vision, is further corroborated and an impulse for another peripety in the story is established. As in the previous case, Aeneas does not question the veracity of his dream, so no suspense of this kind is produced. Nevertheless, we might observe Virgil's sense of dramatic impact: whereas, in the first dream, the hero sees the ghost of the dead Trojan leader who initiates Aeneas's quest, as his divine mission advances, Aeneas is visited by lower deities representing Apollo, whose presence give the situation an aura of urgency and a sense of dramatic gradation.

In Book IV, the protagonist is visited by the god Mercury – first in person, for the second time in sleep – who reminds him of his duty. Aeneas is having an affair with Dido, Queen of Carthage, which results in his procrastination. Mercury first appears to him in the daytime, accusing him of neglecting his mission and of selfishness (ll. 265–78). Unwillingly, Aeneas starts preparations for the journey towards Italy. The Queen is furious and tries to dissuade him, but to no avail. Although the ships are ready to set off, Aeneas is sleeping on his boat, postponing the journey. A second visitation is therefore necessary to provoke an action: a "vision of the god [*forma dei*]" appears to Aeneas in sleep, urging him not to waste time, since the Queen might be able detain him (ll. 556–70). Only after this warning does Aeneas order his crew to set out on the journey. A dream in this particular situation enjoys a special status: while, in the case of the first of Aeneas's visions, the dream has to be substantiated by a waking visit of a deity in person, here the personal appearance fails to have the desired effect and it is the subsequent dream that makes the hero obey the gods' will. We might say that, as the plot advances with the help of dreams, the authority of nocturnal visions rises.

The fourth and last dream of Aeneas takes place in Italy, where the hero has to wage war with the local leader, Turnus. The beginning of Book VIII finds the hero in a crisis: he is worried about the difficulties of the conflict and his prospects. When he lets "sleep at last steal over his limbs [*procubuit seramque dedit per membra quietem*]" on the river bank (8. 30),[49] he is visited by the god Tiberinus, who assures Aeneas of the gods' favour and, in order to persuade him that his words are not just "the idle feigning of sleep [*ne vana putes haec fingere somnum*]" (l. 42), he gives him a semi-allegorical sign: Aeneas will encounter a white sow with a litter of thirty pigs. The place will designate the spot where, in thirty-years' time, his son Ascanius will found the city of Alba. Finally, Tiberinus advises the hero to form an alliance with the Arcadians, enemies of Turnus. Just as the previous dreams which were sent to Aeneas on his journey and which aided him at pivotal points of his wandering, Tiberinus's nocturnal visitation announces the hero's final success and gives him almost material assistance to remove the last obstacle to reach his goal. For the first time in the story, the possibility of questioning the dream's authenticity is mentioned, but all potential doubts are instantly dispersed.

Although the dreams in *Aeneid* are formally very Homeric, establishing a clear link between the worlds of mortals and gods, we can clearly observe a qualitative gap in their employment. The dreams are no longer a volatile addition to the narrative, but have become an indispensable element, without which the development of the story would not be possible. Dreams both motivate the action of the story and contribute to its formal and artistic unity. In addition to this, predominantly technical, function, Aeneas's oneiric experiences significantly assist in shaping the atmosphere of the work. The audience are kept reminded of the gods' crucial rôle in human existence, but also – more importantly – of their rôle in Aeneas's mission, which corroborates the overall message of one of the earliest national epics in Western literature. As Stearns argues, since the *Aeneid* provided a model and served as a canon for Latin narrative works, its handling of dreams influenced the subsequent writers of epic, such as Silius Italicus (AD c. 28–c. 103) and his *Punica*, which contains several important dream episodes, also, Vergilian in nature.[50]

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[49] Virgil, *Aeneid* (Books 7–12), in *Virgil*, Vol. 2, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000) 1–367.

[50] See Stearns 17–18 and ff.

## 1. 5 Dramatic Dreams in Roman Tragedy

In Roman drama, the employment of dreams continued the Greek dramatic tradition. Dreams, often in an allegorical form, foreshadowed the ensuing events or warned against future dangers, usually to the puzzlement of the dreamers and other fictional characters. Dream prophecies could also function as an active impulse for the evolution of the story, as we observed in epic narratives.[51]

The oldest surviving dream in Latin drama comes from the tragedy of *Alexander* by Ennius (c. 239–c. 169 BC). Although the play is extant only in fragmentary form, the well-known story of Paris (the eponymous hero, Alexander) allows us to reconstruct the oneiric episode's function in the story. In the prologue of the play, Cassandra narrates a dream in which Queen Hecuba saw herself giving birth to a torch (*mater grauida parere se ardentem facem / uisa est in somnis Hecuba*, ll. 50f).[52] Bewildered by the dream's content, King Priam, for the peace of his mind, seeks the significance of the vision (*tum coniecturam postulat pacem petens*, l. 55), only to be told that his son has to be disposed of, since he is destined to become the curse of the city. Paris is thus given to shepherds to be killed, but they, instead, rear him. The dream, although it takes place before the opening of the play, is presented as the initial impulse to the story (its function in the early phases of *Alexander* can be roughly compared to the "G" prophecy of *Richard III*). At the end of the play, however, the Prince comes by chance to the Trojan palace, where he is recognised by Cassandra. The prophecy of the dream has not been overcome, nor has the destruction of Troy been averted.

In another fragmentary tragedy, *Brutus* by Accius (170–c. 86 BC), we encounter a further example of such an irreversible prognostication. Probably at the beginning of the play, King Tarquin has a dream, in which he sees a herd of sheep, from which he chooses two rams for sacrifice. When sacrificing the first one, the second animal attacks him and throws him on the ground. Wounded and stretched on his back, the King observes how the sun in the sky changes its natural direction (ll. 650–62).[53] The explanation of this elaborate allegory, provided by the royal interpreters, is very vague: on the one hand, the oracles assert that things which people do, think of, worry about, and see in their waking life normally happen in dreams (*in somno accidunt*) (ll. 663–65). Nevertheless, the King should beware, lest someone (like the ram) expels him from the throne (ll. 665–68). Then

[51] This discussion of the use of dreams in Latin drama partly draws upon Stearns.

[52] Ennius, *Alexander*, in *The Tragedies of Ennius: The Fragments*, ed. H. D. Jocelyn (London: Cambridge UP, 1967) 75–81.

[53] Accius, *Brutus*, in *Oeuvres (fragments)*, ed. Jacqueline Dangel (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1995) 237–39.

the interpreters assure the King of the positive signification of the events from the second part of the dream for the people (*Haec bene uerruncent populo!*, l. 670), because, although some kind of change in the society is indicated, the Roman state will remain great (ll. 671f).

Although we do not have enough textual material to guess at the King's response or other specific rôles of the episode in the structure of the play, the ambiguous interpretation suggests that, whereas the meaning of the dream prophecy was clear to the audience, the King did not realise the warning until it was too late. The natural cause of dreams, which the royal interpreters offer, does not apply in this case: from our knowledge of Roman history and from the title of the play, we might assume that the incident with two rams refers to Lucius Junius Brutus, the leader of the popular uprising against the King and the founder of the Roman Republic, and his brother, whom Tarquin put to death. The change for the people (*populo commutatio*, l. 669), which the oracles mention, indeed turns out positively for the state, but not for the King himself, as he might assume from the oracles' cryptic warning: the ram (Brutus) ultimately overthrows him. The dream was thus most probably meant to be a source of dramatic suspense and irony.

Dreams and omens also play an important rôle in *Octavia*, a tragedy traditionally included in the canon of Seneca (4 BC–AD 65). The eponymous heroine confides to her nurse that often, when her body relaxes and sleep subdues her eyes (*membra cum solvit quies / et fessa fletu lumina oppressit spoor*, ll. 116f), she sees the ghost of her brother Britannicus.[54] In Octavia's dreams, Britannicus attacks Nero's face with torches (*facibus*). When the emperor violently stabs his opponent, he kills Octavia as well, since her brother in terror clings tightly to her (ll. 115–24). Although no attempt to interpret the dream takes place, its individual themes pervade, in various forms, the entire play. First of all, the dream raises the question of Octavia's fate, one of the most crucial issues of the story. Since the play deals with a subject of Roman history (in fact, it is the only extant Roman example of *fabula praetexta*), the audience is meant to interpret the dream as the foreshadowing of Octavia's execution ordered by her husband Nero, the murderer of Britannicus (l. 861). The heroine herself, however, is not so certain of her fate: when banished from her husband's quarters, she hopes that she will be "spared forbidding / and the terror of death" (ll. 659f). Whereas she has to wait until the very lasts moments of the play for the true explanation of her visions, the spectators can guess it early on it the play.

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[54] Seneca [attributed to], *Octavia*, in *Seneca*, Vol. 9, ed. and trans. John G. Fitch (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004) 499–607.

Octavia's nightmare also mentions the symbol of a torch for the first time, which, in this early phase of the plot, does not seem to be especially pertinent, but later on proves to be a dramatic representation of the wrath against Nero, presaging his ignominious end. When the ghost of Nero's mother, Agrippina, appears on the stage, it is holding a Stygian torch (*Stygiam facem*) "to herald this iniquitous wedding [*i.e.*, the wedding of Nero and his mistress Poppaea]" (ll. 594f). Recounting the wrongs which Nero has inflicted upon his mother, Agrippina promises that the torch's flames will soon "turn to funeral fires [*vertet ad tristes rogos*]" (l. 597). When the chorus, representing Roman people, hears about Octavia's banishment, it indeed promises to storm the imperial palace "with flames [*flammis*] and weapons" (l. 688). The ensuing tragedy is foreshadowed by Poppaea's ominous dream, which shows the new wife to Nero her chamber thronged by a crowd, among which is Agrippina, who – wielding a torch (*quatiebat facem*) – lures Poppaea into the underworld to show her the fate of her former husband, son and Nero (ll. 712–34). Although Poppaea's nurse tries to comfort her with a positive explanation, the flames of wrath soon reach the imperial couple: when the crowd attacks the palace, the emperor furiously asks, "What of that mob that made bold to attack my house with flames[?]" (ll. 850f) As a revenge for the riot, Nero himself orders Rome to be set on fire (ll. 831–33).

The use of dreams in *Octavia* testifies to an advanced stage in the development of dreams as a dramatic device. The, by the time, well-established topos allowed the dramatist to raise, by means of dream allegories, the audience's expectations and produce a tension between the foreknowledge of the spectators and the ignorance of the characters on the stage. The appearance of certain topics and symbols both in dreams and the waking world draws attention to the central themes of the play and, once more, contributes to the work's atmosphere and dramatic unity.

### 1. 6 The Employment of Dreams in Roman Comedy

Although – as in Greek drama – tragedy remained the prime genre to make effective use of dreams, the motif occasionally appeared in the Roman comedy as well, adopting certain features of its tragic counterpart, but at the same time exploiting them for its own ends. In *Curculio* by Plautus (c. 254–184 BC), we find a humorous episode of the sick pimp Cappadox, asking the Cook to interpret his dream of the previous night. Cappadox "seemed to see in [his] dreams [*in somnis uisus sum uiderier*]" Asclepius sitting at a great

distance from him, not listening to his petition (ll. 260–63).[55] The Cook tells Cappadox that the gods are displeased with him and that he should appease them by performing dream incubation in the temple of Jupiter (ll. 263–67). Upon Cappadox's departure, the Cook expresses a wish that the dream turn out badly for Cappadox (l. 273).

At the beginning of Act 3 of another Plautine comedy, *Rudens* ("The Rope"), the noble Daemones confides to the audience that, on the previous night, "[he] dreamed a strange and uncanny dream [*mirum atque inscitum somniaui somnium*]" (l. 597).[56] In his nocturnal vision, he saw an ape, trying to climb a tree in an attempt to drag swallows from their nest. When the monkey asked Daemones for a ladder, he refused, begging the monkey not to harm the birds (for they were born from Philomela and Procne). The angry monkey summoned Daemones to court, but the latter grabbed it and tied it with chains. The interpretation soon offers itself: immediately after his soliloquy, Daemones is asked by Trachalio to aid two slave-girls, Palaestra and Ampelisca, who have taken refuge in a temple from Labrax the pimp. Labrax tries to drag the women from the temple, but Daemones, with the assistance of two other slaves, manages to overpower the pimp and punish him. At this point, Daemones realises that "this is the monkey that wants to drag these swallows from their nest against their will, which [he] dreamed about in [his] sleep" (ll. 771–73).

Finally, at the beginning of Act 2 of Plautus's *Mercator* ("The Merchant"), the old man Demipho complains that "[he] was agitated and troubled in [his] sleep last night [*ego nocte hac quae praeteriit proxuma / in somnis egi satis et fui homo exercitus*]" (l. 227f).[57] Then he continues to give an account of his strange dream, in which he bought himself a she-goat, but in order not to upset the goat which he already had at home, he entrusted the former to a monkey. Not much later on, however, the monkey refused to continue looking after the goat, since it had eaten up its wife's dowry. At the point of crisis, a child approached Demipho and informed him that he had taken the goat from the monkey, laughing at him. Demipho interprets the image of the goat as a beautiful woman named Pasicompsa, whom his son, Charinus, brought as a maid for his mother and with whom Demipho has fallen in love. The rest of the dream remains obscure to him (ll. 225–71). As in *Rudens*, the allegory of the dream is explained by the unfolding action: Demipho buys Pasicompsa, but in order to hide her from his wife (*i.e.*, the other goat of his dream), he

[55] Plautus, *Curculio*, in *Plautus*, Vol. 2, ed. and trans. Wolfgang de Melo (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011) 217–313.

[56]Plautus, *Rudens*, in *Plautus*, Vol. 4, ed. and trans. Wolfgang de Melo (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012) 389–559.

[57] Plautus, *Mercator*, in *Plautus*, Vol. 3, ed. and trans. Wolfgang de Melo (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2011) 1–127.

entrusts her to his neighbour Lysimachus (the monkey). Upon finding Pasicompsa in her house, however, Lysimachus's wife, Dorippa, makes a scandal. At the end, Pasicompsa is restored to Charinus with the help of his friend Eutychus (one of which is in the dream symbolised by the child), son to Lysimachus.

All the three examples offer a kind of parody of the dream interpretation found in higher dramatic genres. Although we can assume that all of them come from the gods, with almost complete a lack of supernatural phenomena in Roman comedy, it can be hardly expected that they provide their respective dreamers with any serious message, important for the advancement of the plot. In the case of *Curculio*, the dream episode has no real implications for the story and does little more than exploiting one of the stock features of Cappadox. The fact itself that the dream is interpreted by the Cook (who, unlike tragic interpreters, wishes the dreamer bad luck) and that it opens with the mouthful, "I seemed to see in my dreams" tells the audience that the episode is not meant to provoke any other emotional response than laughter.

Although the remaining two dreams are more germane to the plot, the traditional tragic employment of dreams is again subverted: before both Daemones and Demipho give accounts of their dreams, they lament how the gods vex sleeping people with uncanny visions (*Rudens*, ll. 593f; *Mercator*, ll. 225f). Instead of disturbing reports, pointing at the fate of the dreamers, however, the spectators hear narratives with comic plots and talking animals, lacking any indication of an ensuing tragedy. None of the dreamers genuinely worry about the outcome and, in both cases, the predictions turn not into human suffering, but a punishment of human vices – a typical feature of classical comedy.

### 1. 7 Dreams in Mediaeval Drama

The disintegration of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD and the following period of economic, social and cultural crisis in Western Europe interrupted the development of theatre, and dramatic techniques, established and refined in the classical period, were largely forgotten. The case of Hrosvitha (c. 935–c. 1002), a nun at the Abbey of Gandersheim in Germany, who composed several religious plays modelled after comedies of Terence (195/185–159 BC) (who, however, did not use dreams as a dramatic device), was an exception rather than the rule. With the Church as the sole patron, dramatic art started slowly appearing again in the ninth century, its rôle, however, being mainly devotional. Just as the occasions for productions of early liturgical drama were restricted to

the celebration of principal Christian feasts, its themes were limited by Biblical material. The functions of dream episodes in the dramatic plots therefore largely copied those of the matching incidents from Scripture rather than having much dramatic independence. Church plays were, in the first place, meant to re-enact popular stories of Christian myth, their authors having little interest in delineating their characters or foreshadowing the development of the plot beyond the well-established Scriptural models.

An example of an early mediaeval use of a dream in a work of drama is the episode in the *Officium Stellae*, in which the Magi are warned in sleep by angels to avoid Herod on their journey from Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2: 12).[58] When they do so and Herod finds out, he orders his soldiers to kill all the boys in the city under the age of two. From the structural point of view, the dream – as in the play's Biblical source – is clearly a motivation for the development of the plot, intervening so as to save the little Jesus. This function, however, is fulfilled by the episode in the source story as well and all we can say is that re-enacting it before the eyes of the audience merely augmented its immediate impact.[59]

Another popular dream episode, appearing in later mediaeval mystery cycles, was Pilate's wife's dream, warning the Roman Prefect not to sentence Jesus to death (cf. Mt 27: 19). In the French cycle *Le Mystère de la Passion* by Arnoul Gréban (c. 1425–c. 1485), Lucifer, in order to prevent Jesus's execution and the salvation of Man, orders Satan to hurry to Pilate's wife and, by means of a dream, cause her to persuade her husband to set Christ free. Pilate, however, does not manage to make the stubborn Jewish priests change their minds and Lucifer's plan fails.[60] An incident based on the same story also appears in the English cycle of *York Mystery Plays* (mid-fourteenth century). In the segment of "The Tapiters and Couchers", the Devil appears in Pilate's wife's bedroom, whispering in her ear that Jesus is innocent and that he must not be executed for his preaching (ll. 167–75).[61] To the audience, the Devil testifies to Jesus's divine origin, claiming that if he be slaughtered, "He will saue man saule fro oure [*i.e.*, the diabolical] sonde / And refe vs þe remys þat are rounde" (ll. 163f). When Pilate's wife wakes up, she claims that she is "drecchid with a dreme full dreadfully to dowte" (l. 176) and immediately sends her son to Pilate with a message to "Deme hym [*i.e.*, Jesus] noght to deth for drede of vengeaunce" (l.

[58] See Glynne Wickham, *A History of the Theatre* (Oxford: Phaidon P, 1985) 71. The episode is also one of the earliest instances of sleeping characters on the Christian stage (see Chapter 2. 2 of the present study for a more detailed discussion).

[59] Wickham asserts that the episode also created an opportunity for exposing the character of Herod. See ibid.

[60] I am relying upon Charles Edward Whitmore's summary of the incident. See Charles Edward Whitmore, *The Supernatural in Tragedy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1915) 142–43.

[61] *Christ before Pilate 1: The Dream of Pilate's Wife*, in *The York Plays*, ed. Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982) 254–70.

290). Having heard the advice, the Jewish priests insist that "He [*i.e.*, Jesus] with wicchecrafte þis wile has he wrought. / Some feende of his sand has he sente / And warned youre wiffe or he wente" (ll. 293–95). As we will discuss in Chapter 3. 1, in the Christian world – unlike the ancient one – the concept of dreams as the Devil's temptation was a philosophical and theological commonplace, so it is not surprising that the new ideas penetrated the sphere of dramatic productions of the time, as in this case.

Comparing both versions of the event, Charles Edward Whitmore sees a cleverer handling of the topos in the work of the English author, signalling the growth of the trope: whereas Gréban's text "takes it [*i.e.*, the dream incident] up when he comes to it, and drops it as soon as he can", the English playwright, by expanding the dream and using it for yet another accusation of Jesus by the Jewish clergy, "leads up to his incident, and makes it a constituent of a later scene".[62] Although Whitmore is right that the English play, despite being older than the French version, uses the dream episode more dramatically, so to speak, its effectiveness again cannot be attributed to the dramatic genius of the anonymous author.

The very fact that Pilate's wife is named Procula in the English play testifies to its, at least partial, dependency upon neo-testamental apocrypha (in none of the canonical gospels is Pilate's wife's name mentioned). From the dialogue between the priests and Pilate, it is obvious that the main source for the interrogation scene was the so-called Gospel of Nicodemus (or "Acts of Pilate"), in which – as in the York play, but unlike the canonical books – the priests accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath (ll. 418–23; Nic. 1: 2)[63] and healing by means of witchcraft (ll. 441–45; Nic. 1: 4). The choice of this particular work was a most logical one: of all the Christian scriptures, the Acts of Pilate describe the interrogation of Jesus in most detail, while the canonical books restrict themselves to rather frugal accounts of the event. When, in the apocryphal gospel, Pilate gets the message about his wife's dream, the priests – similarly to the priests of the York play – say to him, "Did we not say unto thee, He is a conjuror? Behold, he hath caused thy wife to dream" (2: 3). The dramatic effect of the dream episode in the York play is therefore primarily due to the dramatic effect of the model upon which it was composed.

Despite the general dependency upon the authority of the Bible, it would, nevertheless, be false to deny the mediaeval dramatic authors any merit for developing sleep and dreams as

[62] Whitmore175.

[63] References to the Gospel of Nicodemus are according to William Hone, ed., *The Apocryphal Books of the New Testament*, new ed. (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1901).

a dramatic device. David Bevington, for instance, mentions a late twelfth-century *Ludus de Passione* from the German Benediktbeuern, which contains two scenes with the sleeping Mary Magdalene being visited by an angel, who reminds her of her sins and her need for Christ's salvation.[64] The episodes reflect a post-Biblical doctrine of Mary being a sinner and prostitute (originating as late as the end of the sixth century with Gregory the Great) and, rather than repeating the well-known story, the dream episode is meant to teach the Christian audience a moral lesson.

Although the piece, in terms of its genre, does not differ from any of the religious plays discussed, from a purely dramatic perspective, it manifests a rather fresh attitude to the motif of a dream: the author did not just copy a ready-to-use sequence from the Bible or some other Christian story, but deliberately employed a dream for his didactic purposes. True to the mediaeval Christian theology of oneiric phenomena, the dream becomes a communicative space between the temporal and divine worlds, a natural means of conveying some special knowledge or doctrine, even outside the well-known Scriptural precedents. The impact of such episodes upon the audience therefore had to be significant. As we will see, this function of dream – that is, its deployment as a frame to communicate an extraordinary truth in a believable manner – had quickly become a commonplace in mediaeval literature as a whole. Mary's nocturnal experience also represents an early form of portraying the character's psychology and inner struggle, represented by a dilemma as to which of the two ways to chose: repentance and redemption, or damnation. Although staying within the Christian moral-theological framework, the dramatic implication of the situation is, to some extent, similar to the characterisational functions which sleep and dreams used to have in classical drama. We can therefore see that, although representations of sleep and dreams in mediaeval drama of the Christian West had entirely different origins, their natural functions were gradually pointing towards the functions which they used to fulfil in the Graeco-Roman dramatic tradition.

The ground for a truly dramatic employment of dreams in mediaeval plays was laid in the early thirteenth century, when Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) forbade dramatic exhibitions by the ecclesiastics (this ban was explicitly repeated at the Synod of Worms in 1316 and the ecumenical Council of Basel in 1440)[65] and drama passed from the domain of the Church (and churches) into the control of towns' guilds (the term "mystery play" refers to

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[64] See David Bevington, "Asleep Onstage", in *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, ed. John A. Alford (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State UP, 1995) 51–83 at 56.

[65] See William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1906) 595.

*misterium*, a Latin word for "craft"). This brought about several changes in the form: although the focus of drama remained on Biblical themes, the plays were more and more aimed at common audiences and their tastes. The language changed from Latin to the vernacular to address even the less educated (or entirely ignorant) social groups; acting, staging and scripts themselves became more elaborate, demanding new creative techniques. The scriptural incidents were rapidly contaminated with "lower" elements, which developed into independent episodes and (later on) independent dramatic stories. With the looser adherence to the Bible and, most importantly, Biblical stories containing dreams, the authors were allowed to use the motif in a less restricted manner and attribute to it new dramatic functions.

An example of such an employment of dreams in late mediaeval drama is the *Secunda Pastorum* ("The Second Shepherds' Play") of the English *Wakefield Cycle* (early fifteenth century). Before the announcement of the birth of Christ, three shepherds meet the notorious sheep-thief Mak. When the shepherds go to sleep, Mak steals one of their sheep and brings it to his house, telling his wife, Gill, to hide it. Then Mak returns to the moor before the shepherds' awakening, pretending that he has spent all night with them. When the shepherds are awaking, they confide to each other dreams which they had about Mak:

> *3 Shep.* Methought he was lapped in a wolf-skin.
> *1 Shep.* So many happed now – namely within.
> *3 Shep.* When we had long napped, methought with a gin
> A fat sheep he trapped; but he made no din.
> *2 Shep.* Be still!
> Thy dreams make thee wood;
> It is but a phantom, by the rood.
> (ll. 368–74)[66]

Unlike the audience, the shepherds do not know yet that one sheep is missing and remain in ignorance as to the meaning of their dreams. The element of misinterpretation, which was appearing in classical drama as a source of dramatic suspense, contributes in the *Secunda Pastorum* to the comical tone of the situation: with just a sheep being at stake,[67] the audience must have been pleased to watch how the shepherds reject the warning which is presented to them in a not so much symbolical form. A source of similar comicality is the subsequent report of a dream of Mak, which is this time completely fabricated. To find an excuse to leave the shepherds before they count the sheep, Mak tells them that he "was

[66] *The Second Shepherds' Pageant*, in *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, ed. A. A. Cawley (London: Dent, 1956) 81–108.

[67] The incident is a light-hearted variation upon the Parable of the Lost Sheep (see Matt. 18: 12–14 and Luke 15: 3–7).

flayed with a sweven", in which "Gill began to croak and travail full sad, / Well-nigh at the first cock, with a young lad / For to mend our flock" (ll. 384, 386–68).

The feigned dream-story structurally refers to both previous and subsequent advancement of the plot: since Mak, at the beginning of his encounter with the shepherds, complains about his wife that "ilk year that comes to man / She brings forth a lakan – / And, some years, two" (ll. 241–43), his dream account (which is supposed to cover his theft) tells the audience that the meeting of the four was by no means accidental and that Mak planned stealing the sheep from the beginning. Mak's remark that the new son from his dream will "mend [their] flock", furthermore, hints at the shepherds' later visit to his house, when he and his wife will hide the stolen sheep in the cradle. Although the play still looks rather crude in comparison with its ancient predecessors or early modern ancestors, it represents one of the most sensitive works with the motif of sleeping and dreaming as a structural device of the period, in many respects foreshadowing the future progress in the genre.

## 1. 8 Mediaeval Dream-Visions: Doctrinal and Courtly Traditions

While drama – including plays with dream episodes – of the Middle Ages made a fresh start with little or no direct influence from its classical predecessor, the affinity of the Graeco-Roman tradition and mediaeval dream poetry seems to be somewhat clearer, testifying to an ongoing development. As early as the first centuries of the Common Era, the canon of religious writing witnessed an interest in literature – represented by works such as the anonymous *Apocalypse of St. Paul* (fourth century AD) or the *Visio Bernoldi* by Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims (ninth century AD) – dealing with the fate of Man after death in form of a vision. A. C. Spearing suggests that, apart from the obvious Scriptural theme, the model for mediaeval eschatological works of this kind was the episodes of the descent to the underworld in Book X of Homer's *Odyssey* and Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*.[68] The form of a dream or a vision as a suitable medium for communicating an extraordinary truth also had classical precedents: at the beginning of Book I of Ennius's epic *Annales*, the author shares a dream with the audience, in which he meets the wraith of Homer on Mount Helicon, who informs him that he (the author) is in fact Homer's reincarnation, and also teaches him about Pythagorean lore, including life of the

[68] See A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 7–8.

underworld.[69] The closing portion of Book VI of *De re publica* by Cicero (106–43 BC), likewise, contains a dream narrated by Scipio Aemilianus, in which he is visited by his dead grandfather, Scipio Africanus, who reveals to his grandson his future, the secrets of the afterlife (most importantly that those who serve their country well go straight to heaven, whereas those who surrender themselves to bodily pleasures first have to undergo a long torment), and the topography of the universe. This episode was especially popular throughout the Middle Ages, thanks to the extensive commentary by the Neo-Platonic philosopher Macrobius (late fourth/early fifth century AD). In his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, Macrobius pays special attention to the dream-frame of the story, maintaining that such a "fabulous narrative" (*narratio fabulosa*), in which "a decent and dignified conception of holy truths, with respectable events and characters, is presented beneath a modest veil of allegory", is "approved by the philosopher who is prudent in handling sacred matters".[70]

Similar "doctrinal visions" were very frequent in the period; Kathryn Lynch argues that "the vision narrative for the Middle Ages was an enormously popular and enduring literary form", comparable to the novel in the modern era.[71] The two most influential works of the genre, mentioned by Spearing as the precursors of courtly dream poetry of the high and late mediaeval period, were *De consolatione Philosophiae* by Boethius (c. 480–524) and *De planctu Naturae* by the French theologian Alanus ab Insulis (c. 1116–1202).[72] The first work, although not directly presented as a dream, introduces an allegorical figure of Philosophy – similar to figurative characters from other dream-visions – who visits the despairing Boethius at his bedside (at the time of the composition of the work, Boethius was in prison, awaiting his execution) and starts a discourse with him upon the nature of happiness, good and evil, nobility, free will and other topics concerning the lot of Man. The work was translated into French and English by two of the most prominent authors of mediaeval dream poetry: Jean de Meun (c. 1240–c. 1305) and Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–

[69] The passage, surviving only in fragments and second-hand reports, is discussed by Stearns, pp. 1–7; and also in W. R. Hardie, "The Dream of Ennivs", *The Classical Quarterly* 7 (1913): 188–95; W. Stuart Messer, "Ad Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 3. 19. 45", *Mnemosyne* 45 (1917): 78–92 at 81–82; and Peter Aicher, "Ennius' Dream of Homer", *The American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989): 227–32. To open a poem with a dream seems to have been a popular technique with Greek and Latin authors, as Messer stresses (*Hic primus igitur, quod quidem ex litteris quae supersunt graecis et latinis sciamus, somnio ad exordium est usus* ["Ad Cic. *Tusc. Disp.*", 81]), and is also to be found in the works of Callimachus (310/305–240 BC) and Euphorion (b. 275 BC), to name just a few. Messer argues that such episodes were employed as a deliberate technical device, shaping the overall design of the poem (*ratio sive oeconomia* […] *poematis* ["Ad Cic. *Tusc. Disp.*", 81–82]).

[70] Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia UP, 1990) 85 = 1. 2. 10–11.

[71] Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1988) 1.

[72] See Spearing 18–24.

1400). The other piece we have mentioned, *De planctu Naturae*, presents the character of Nature, the deputy of God, who appears to the author in a supernatural dream to lament the imperfection of Man. Most importantly, the main subject of Nature's criticism is sexual perversion, which, in a way, prefigures the *ars amoris* theme of courtly poetry. Spearing asserts that, in this respect, the work "had an important direct influence on the *Roman de la Rose*", the most important representative of secular mediaeval dream-vision (see below).[73]

The expansion of the form from the exclusive sphere of moral-theological discourse to that of court poetry – or, in other words, its transformation from doctrinal-vision into love-vision – took place by the thirteenth century, most probably in France. The oldest surviving example of the thus modified genre is *Li Fablel dou Dieu d'Amors* (early thirteenth century), which establishes some basic elements, adopted by most of the succeeding authors of the genre: the Poet falls asleep to "wake up" (as a Dreamer) on a May morning in an idealized landscape, resembling an archetypal image of the Garden of Eden, furnished with trees, flowers, singing birds and a magical stream. There he finds a secular form of the *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed orchard, reserved only for men of a high rank. Having entered the orchard and sat under a tree with magical powers, the Dreamer overhears a debate between various bird species (representing different social groups) as to whether all classes of men are equally suitable for love – an argument that does not seem to have a clear conclusion. In the second part of the poem, the Dreamer is visited by his beloved lady, who takes him to the allegorical castle of the God of Love.[74]

The best-known and the most influential heir to the *Fablel* – which is at the same time the most celebrated literary work of the thirteenth century and perhaps the only piece of literature written before the year 1300 that enjoyed uninterrupted popularity with a secular reading audience up to the middle of the sixteenth century – is the *Romance of the Rose*. Its first section (4,058 lines) composed by Guillaume de Lorris (c. 1200–c. 1238) around 1230, and its much longer continuation (17,724 lines) supplied by Jean de Meun in about 1275, the *Romance* gives an account of a "very beautiful and pleasing dream [un songe … / qui mout fu biaus et mout me plot]"[75] of a Poet, who, in the prologue, expresses his wish to set it down in a work "in which the whole art of love is contained [ou l'art

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[73] Spearing 20.

[74] For a more detailed summary of the poem, including a discussion of its influence upon other works of the period and a bibliographical report, see D. S. Brewer, Appendix I, in *The Parlement of Foulys*, by Geoffrey Chaucer (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1972) 129–132. For a critical edition of the French original, see Charles Oulmont, ed., *Les Débats du Clerc et du Chevalier* (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, 1911) 197–216. An English prose translation was published in B. A. Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982) 85–91.

[75] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 31 = ll. 26f.

d'Amors est tote enclose]".[76] Similar to the story of the *Fablel*, the oneiric episode takes place on a May day in a symbolic, blooming meadow, with a beautiful garden in the centre, surrounded by a high wall with images of personified non-courteous qualities excluded from it (Hatred, Felony, Villainy, Covetousness, Envy, Sorrow and others). The dreamer is let in by Idleness and learns that the founder and owner of the place is Diversion, an "elegant charmer [le mignot, le cointe]".[77] Filled with joy, the narrator describes the noble company which he encounters, among which are Diversion himself, Joy, Courtesy, Wealth, Beauty and the God of Love, accompanied by Sweet Look, who carries the God's five beautiful (Beauty, Simplicity, Openness, Company and Fair Seeming) and five ugly (Pride, Villainy, Shame, Despair and New Thought) arrows. The Dreamer leaves the assemblage to inspect the garden. Although it is clear by this point that the garden is a secular *locus amoenus* rather than a religious one, the description of the scenery is pervaded by a markedly sacral imagery, calling, for instance, the garden "the earthly paradise [paradis terrestre]"[78] and describing the singing of the birds "as though they were heavenly angels [con fussent angre esperitel]".[79]

Having spotted a rose-bush in a crystal mirror of the fountain of Narcissus, the Dreamer is hit by the God of Love's arrows and falls in love with one of the roses. The narrator's complicated romance thus begins and the (so far) uninvolved visitor to the garden turns into a Lover. He submits himself to the God of Love, who provides him with ten commandments containing the code of courtly behaviour, and rejects the advice of Lady Reason, who has been observing the Dreamer from her tower and who urges him to forget about love. With the help of Venus, the Lover manages to approach the Rose and kiss it. This, however, alerts the Rose's guardians: Jealousy builds a solid castle around the Rose and Fair Welcoming, son to Courtesy and the narrator's companion, is imprisoned as well. Only in Jean de Meun's supplement, in which the clear story-line of the previous text gives way to numerous encyclopaedic digressions (often having little to do with the theme of love and even less with courtly love) in the form of lengthy speeches of the story's allegorical participants, is the castle stormed by the God of Love's army and the Lover finally plucks his rose – at which point he is awoken by the day (Atant fu jorz, et je m'esveille).[80]

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[76] Ibid. = l. 38.
[77] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 38 = l. 588.
[78] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 39 = l. 634.
[79] Ibid. = l. 662.
[80] See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 254 = l. 21,750.

Both the form and contents of the *Romance* have been commented upon extensively.[81] Because of limited space, we shall focus solely on the motif of the dream itself in the poem and how it contributes to the work's composition and interpretation. James Wimsatt has argued against defining courtly dream-visions as an independent genre. He maintains that many of the conventions associated with secular dream poetry (an idealised landscape, springtime settings, allegorical action, an authoritative guide figure) are also to be found in works which do not adopt the dream-framework, and also that some other dream-poems of the period, despite employing the dream portion, do not contain these commonplaces. "The conventions," concludes Wimsatt, "provided important tools, but they did not control".[82]

Yet the material of the *Romance* (and other works of the love-vision genre) clearly shows affiliation with the tradition of doctrinal vision. We have mentioned examples of the use of religious imagery for the description of the poem's secular world. Another instance of such permeation of two (seemingly opposing) philosophical frameworks might be the delineation of Lady Reason ("By her appearance and her face it seemed that she was made in paradise […]. God made her in the skies in his likeness and in his image [A son semblant et a son vis / part qu'el fu fete ou paravis / … Dex la fist ou firmament / a sa semblance et s'image]"),[83] which makes a further step and effectively endorses the doctrine of the divinity of the human soul (as we shall see in Chapter 2. 1, reason was traditionally considered as the soul's highest component). Commentators generally agree that the "art" of love is in the work presented in a manner of a "theology" of love, making conscientious use of the motives and techniques of religious literary visions. J. Stephen Russell stresses the poem's primary aim at conveying a "hidden, scriptural, intransitive truth"[84] and, using a rather expressive language, calls the *Romance* "the singular blasphemous parody that cribbed the rhetorical strategies of Macrobius and Augustine and brought them into the service of secular, popular literature".[85] Similarly, Spearing asserts that "a major reason for the use of the setting of the religious vision, and for all other

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[81] For an excellent bibliographical report, see Maxwell Luria, *A Reader's Guide to the "Roman de la Rose"* (Hamden, CT: Anchor Books, 1982) 223–65. For more recent scholarship on the *Romance*, see, for instance, David F. Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First "Roman de la Rose"* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986); Sylvia Huot, *The "Romance of the Rose" and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); or Christine McWebb (ed.), *Debating the "Roman de la Rose": A Critical Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[82] James Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets* (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1968) 125–6.

[83] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 73 = ll. 2969f, 2973f.

[84] J. Stephen Russell, *The English Dream Vision: Anatomy of Form* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 1988) 108.

[85] Russell 109.

details taken from religion, is that it is intended to correspond and convey the intensity of the actual experience of falling in love".[86]

The most prominent element of the language of religion used in the *Romance* is, of course, the dream frame itself. With the concept of divine dreams being an intellectual commonplace throughout the Middle Ages (see Chapter 3. 1), the oneiric framework lent the religious and doctrinal visions a special authority, testifying to the importance and veracity of the matter discussed inside the frame. The truthfulness of these dreams is, traditionally, never questioned and needs not to be specially proved. The *Romance*, on the other hand, does not suggest that its dream comes from God; the narrator, however, takes pains to convince his readers that the dream of which he is going to give an account is no less true than religious visions and that the subject of it should be taken equally seriously. To support his claims, Guillaume de Lorris takes as a witness "an author named Macrobius, who did not take dreams as trifles [un auctor qui ot nom Macrobes / qui ne tint pas songes a lobes]" (as we have mentioned, Macrobius was the first author to advocate the use of a dream-story for conveying serious subjects) and expresses a conviction that "a dream signifies the good and evil that come to men [senges est senefiance / des biens as genz et des anuiz]".[87] Having thus established the validity of his argument, the narrator is free to handle – in a doctrinal-like manner – the subject of his discourse, which, despite its seemingly popular nature, was in the period frequently included in scholastic tracts (for instance André le Chapelain's *De arte honeste amandi* [1185]). It appears thus that the very presence of a dream conditions a certain kind of treatment of the included material and gives the reader an interpretational key to the entire work.

Another formal feature of the *Romance*, and, potentially, the dream genre as a whole, is something which we might call "metafictionality". As Spearing notes, the fact that the speaker of the poem enters the work both as a Dreamer, who is directly involved in the dream-experience, and a narrator, who retells the story in retrospect (from the prologue of the *Romance*, we learn that there is a five-year gap between the composition of the poem and the event which it describes) and is separable from the Dreamer, draws the audience's attention to the form of the work itself and opens a possibility for the author to reflect upon himself and his art. In the English tradition, Chaucer took a further step and, apart from an elaborate persona of a humble and, in many respects, ignorant narrator, who comments upon his past self as a Dreamer, also several times enters the work as the empirical author Geoffrey Chaucer, whose writings are named and advertised (see below).

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[86] Spearing 28.

[87] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 31 = ll. 7f, 16f.

Spearing concludes that “the dream-poem becomes a device for expressing the poet’s consciousness of himself as poet and for making his work reflexive”.[88]

A practical use of this device for artistic purposes is discernible in one scene of Jean de Meun’s portion of the poem, in which the God of Love laments the approaching death of Guillaume de Lorris (having the poet’s tomb ready) and looks forward to the birth of Jean de Meun, who will finish Guillaume’s work.[89] An observant reader realises that she is confronted with a work, whose first author is dead and whose second has not yet been born. Moreover, the identity of the fictitious narrator – the Poet, Dreamer and Lover combined – is complicated as well: is Jean’s passage supposed to be an account of a dead man, of someone yet to be born, or someone completely else? And does the persona of the Dreamer of the continuation of the poem negate that of the original segment? The dream, with its inherently chaotic nature and mantic qualities, can easily justify these paradoxes, but at the same time reminds the reading audience of the fact that “it is a work of fiction [they] are reading”.[90] Although Wimsatt’s observation about the arbitrariness of the dream frame might be applicable to some of the examples of the rich and diverse dream-genre, there surely are cases when the dream indeed constitutes what Messer calls the *ratio sive oeconomia poematis*.

The impact of the *Romance* in European literatures was enormous. About three hundred surviving manuscripts testify to the poem’s popularity throughout the Middle Ages. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, allusions to it can be found in the works of some of the most prominent French poets, both aristocratic and popular (Rutebeuf [c. 1245–1285], Guillaume de Machaut [c. 1300–1377], Charles d’Orleans [1394–1465] or François Villon [1431–after 1463]); at the end of the thirteenth century came Gui de Mori’s adaptation of the work and, around the same time, two Dutch translations appeared. In the century to follow, the *Romance* was adapted into two Italian works, *Il Fiore* and *Detto d’amore*; Guillaume’s and Jean’s work surely influenced Dante Alighieri (c. 1265–1321) (to whom the aforementioned Italian adaptations are sometimes attributed). It is especially pertinent for our discussion that the work must have been well-known in mediaeval England as well: three anonymous fragments of the *Romance* in middle English survive, of which about 1,700 lines (“Fragment A”) are believed to be by Chaucer – an author whose contribution

[88] Spearing 6.
[89] See Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 187–89 = ll. 10,526–678.
[90] Spearing 40.

to the English dream tradition was immense and whose works enjoyed considerable popularity with an English reading audience well beyond the end of the mediaeval period.

## 1. 9 Dream-Poetry in Mediaeval England

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the dream-vision tradition flourished across Europe, both in great literatures, such as French (in, for instance, Machaut's *Dit des quatre sièges* and *Dit dou vergier*, or *Paradys d'amours* by Jean Froissart [c. 1337–c. 1405]), and the comparatively small ones, such as Bohemian (in *Májový sen*, "The May Dream", by Henry the Younger of Poděbrady [1452–1492]). Because of the breadth of the topic and the space restrictions of this outline, we shall only confine ourselves to dream and vision poetry in late mediaeval England.

Two distinct strands in late mediaeval English dream poetry are discernible: the first drawing upon modern Continental conventions of secular dream-vision, "cosmopolitan and extrovert", as Jan Čermák describes it, written in metrical verse, originally connected with the area of London, and represented mainly by the works of Chaucer and his followers; the second, an heir to the English alliterative tradition (its oldest representative being the eighth-century *Dream of the Rood*, the earliest surviving English mystical poem), "domestic and introvert",[91] which shows affiliation with northern parts of England and largely retained the moral-theological ethos of doctrinal visions. Despite their different ideological frameworks, different audiences, and different immediate fates (while the Chaucerian achievement continued to live in the era of Renaissance Humanism through print culture, English late mediaeval spiritual visions did not emancipate themselves from the manuscript tradition, their influence thus being limited), both sub-genres were, so to speak, aware of each other's existence and techniques, and instances of thematic overlaps and interactions between the two are discernible.

The spiritual branch of late mediaeval English dream-poetry (which appears to be several decades older than the secular tradition) includes, on the one hand, works such as the anonymous *Winner and Waster* (c. 1353) or *The Parliament of Three Ages* (c. 1370) – typical mediaeval *disputationes* with a very limited story-line, in which allegorical abstractions of human qualities or attitudes quarrel over whose position is the right one –

[91] See Jan Čermák, "Branami snů", in *Sen o rytíři* [= The Book of the Duchess], by Geoffrey Chaucer, trans. Martin Pokorný (Prague: Jitro, 2007) 9–28 at 21.

and, on the other hand, more elaborate compositions (but still with a strong element of didacticism), such as William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1369–mid-1380s) or the poem *Pearl* (usually dated between 1360 and 1390), sometimes attributed to one John Massey.[92] The common focus of these works is the correction of human affairs and Man's spiritual rebirth. This is, however, achieved not so much through a revelation of a truth about the other world (as it is in earlier doctrinal-visions) but, as Spearing stresses, through "an insight into life in this world".[93] In *Winner and Waster*, the Dreamer (a poet who falls asleep in a meadow) witnesses an argument of the embodied principles of gathering and spending before the then King Edward III. Both positions are advocated from a moral-theological perspective and neither of them wins the argument, since the world is in need of a balance between both. Similarly, in *The Parliament of Three Ages*, the concepts of winning and wasting are addressed again, in a dispute between Youth (who favours wasting) and Middle Age (who takes the side of winning). The strife is ended by Old Age, who reminds the two disputants – as well as the Dreamer (a huntsman who fell asleep in a forest) and the readers of the poem – that earthly goods are just vanity and that men should rather turn to their spiritual lives, since death will ultimately devour everything.

The economic reality of the mediaeval world is also one of the underlying themes of the longest and most complex work of the category, *Piers Plowman*. At the beginning of the piece, the Dreamer (a hermit named Will) finds himself weary on Malvern Hills "on a May mornyng" (B Prologue, 5), where he "slombre[s] in a slepyng" (l. 10) and enjoys "a merveilouse swevene" (l. 11).[94] In his vision, he sees the world as a field full "Of alle maner of men […] / Worchyng and wanderyng as the worlde asketh" (ll. 19f), with the tower of Truth on the top of the hill end and the keep of Wrong on the bottom of the valley. Then the Dreamer meets Dame Holy Church, who tells him that, if he wants to save his soul, he has to follow the Truth (standing in the poem both for the name of God and the highest principle, "tresore the triest on earthe" [B I. 137]). The Dreamer's spiritual journey (the poem is divided into 20 *passus*, or steps, underlining the theme of pilgrimage) thus begins, being in the work presented as a series of dreams – sometimes even dreams-within-dreams. During these, the narrator witnesses (besides other marvellous things) the

[92] Although several candidates for the *Pearl*-poet have been suggested (see Malcolm Andrew, "Theories of Authorship", in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997] 23–34), John Massey of Cheshire seems to be the most popular one (although not universally accepted). For a summary of the arguments for Massey's authorship, see, for instance, Clifford J. Peterson, "The *Pearl*-Poet and John Massey of Cotton, Cheshire", *The Review of English Studies* (New Series) 25 (1974): 257–66.

[93] Spearing 131.

[94] William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2006).

arrangement of the marriage between False and Meed (who ultimately marries Conscience instead) and encounters a number of – more or less allegorical – characters. One of them is the eponymous Piers Plowman, a universal Man, who successively assumes the rôles of a peasant, landlord, Christ and the founder of the Church.

The motif of sleeping and dreaming enters the composition of the work on both thematic and formal levels: first of all, the narrator's dreams occupy most of the poem's more than 7,000 lines, while his waking states are only dedicated about 200 lines. Čermák explains this by the special status of truths revealed in dreams in the mediaeval world, asserting that for the hermit, only sleep is truly life-giving.[95] Secondly, although the reader might observe the spiritual growth of the Dreamer, it is not the narrator who is the poem's focus, but the fate of mankind. The fictitious dreams become a vehicle for the narration, but also an important factor in the poem's design: Spearing argues that the protean character of the dream-world of *Piers Plowman* and its inhabitants, and the growing uncertainty of the fictitious world's nature, correlate with the views of dreams in the period. He concludes that this treatment of the dream material of the poem is intentional, maintaining that "the overall effect of reading *Piers Plowman* is […] like the experience of dreaming".[96]

An encounter between the two branches of English dream-poetry most clearly takes place in *Pearl*, one of the most subtle and formally perfect mediaeval English poems. At the beginning of the work, the narrator (who is referred to as a jeweller, although it is not clear whether the identification is literal or metaphorical) laments the loss of his "priuy perle withouten spot" (l. 12),[97] which disappeared in a garden. Falling asleep, the Dreamer finds himself in a supernatural world, where he meets a maiden bedecked with pearls, sitting on the opposite bank of a river. After some time, he recognises in her the pearl which he has mentioned before and which, the text suggests (although never explicitly), is the jeweller's daughter who died in infancy. The Pearl-Maiden tells the Dreamer that he has his "tale mysetente" (l. 257), claiming that she was not lost but won an eternal life in the otherworld. Filled with joy, the narrator hopes that he will be able to stay with his Pearl, but the Maiden castigates him for this idea, maintaining that he will only be able to cross the river between them when he dies. Then he asks the Maiden to tell him at least about the world she lives in, upon which he is informed how the Lord took the Pearl in marriage and

[95] See Čermák 23.
[96] Spearing 142.
[97] *Pearl*, in *The Complete Works of the "Pearl" Poet*, ed. Malcolm Andrew, Ronald Waldron and Clifford Peterson (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1993) 43–101.

crowned her Queen of Heaven. The jeweller finds the things which he hears hard to believe, not being able to free himself of earthly logic and accept the divine one. Finally, he is allowed to peek into the heavenly Jerusalem and witness a wedding of Christ and a hundred and forty thousand maids, including his "lyttel quene" (l. 1147). Overwhelmed by the sight, the Dreamer disregards the Maiden's instructions and decides to cross the river, at which point he wakes up. He is dissatisfied and filled with sorrow, but finally ready to commit his Pearl (as well as the pearl of his soul) to God, "[i]n Krystez dere blessyng and myn [*i.e.*, the speaker's]" (l. 1208).

Despite *Pearl*'s clear doctrinal appeal (the core of the exchange between the jeweller and the Pearl is the concept of God's grace, a major theme in the theological discourse of the time),[98] the poetic language by means of which the narrative communicates its spiritual message very much draws upon the secular. Unlike in the English spiritual visions discussed above (but consistently with courtly dream-poetry), the Dreamer of *Pearl* and his oneiric experience are at the very centre of the poem. In the opening lines, we meet him "fordolked of luf-daungere" (l. 11) in a garden, which nominally refers to the *locus amoenus* of the *Romance of the Rose* and other works of the courtly dream-vision tradition (the *Pearl*-poet uses the Anglo-Norman term "erbere", rather than the more domestic "gardyne"; the *Romance* calls the garden of pleasure by the etymologically related word "vergier"). The reader, however, soon realises that the garden's nature is different from what she might have expected: in the *Romance*, it is placed in the dream-world and is presented as an unsurpassable ideal, a stage for love gained; in *Pearl*, the same locus symbolises the corruptible world of loss (the poem does not take place in spring, the season of birth, but "[i]n Auguste in a hyȝ seysoun" [l. 39], when "rychez to rot is runne" [l. 26]), which is yet to be replaced by a paradisal, jewelled landscape of the dream. When, later into the poem's narrative, the Pearl-Maiden informs the jeweller that what he has lost was "bot a rose / Þat flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef" (ll. 269f), the allusion to the supreme symbol of courtly love (and human love in general) only stresses that such an affection is transient and cannot compete with the heavenly *caritas*. Similarly, Corinne Saunders draws attention to the courtly sentiments in the Maiden's description of her union with Christ: he is her "dere Destyné", whilst she to him is a "lemman swete"; he calls her out of "bonerté" and gives her "myȝt and als bewté" (ll. 758–65).[99] The Pearl makes it immediately clear, however, that her relationship with the Lamb cannot be seen

[98] See Spearing 123.

[99] See Corinne Saunders, "Introduction III", in *Pearl: A Modernised Version of the Middle English Poem by Victor Watts*, ed. David Fuller and Corinne Saunders (London: Enitharmon P, 2005) 14–21 at 19.

through the prism of courtly love – she is not Christ's only "makelez quene" (l. 784), but "[þ]e Lambes vyues in blysse we bene, / A hondred and forty þowsande flot", as the Apocalypse of John teaches (ll. 784–86). *Pearl* can thus be read as a direct response to, and a polemic with, the Continental love-visions, which skilfully uses their secular formal devices to subvert them and fill them with a new, largely de-secularised, meaning.

Another significant feature of *Pearl* is its employment of a trope which we observed in both classical and mediaeval literary traditions – that of the incompetent dreamer. Earlier in this chapter, we have mentioned the cases of works in which the reading or theatregoing audience are given more insight into the meaning and veracity of the dream than the dreamer himself, which effectively produces dramatic suspense and raises the audience's involvement in the story presented to them. This literary convention – which assumes various forms throughout the history of fiction and which is by no means limited to dramatic genres[100] – is discernible in some of the mediaeval dream-visions as well, its employment in *Pearl* being particularly apparent.

From the moment of encounter of the jeweller and the Pearl, it is obvious that the Dreamer is, to a large extent, incapable of understanding his visionary experience. Although an exchange between an inadequate character and an authoritative figure is a common device in mediaeval writing to convey an extraordinary piece of information to the reader, in the case of *Pearl*, the technique also enriches the narrative with an emotional element. The more the narrator asks about the world in which his Pearl lives, the more he fails at comprehending it (but, at the same time, gains the human sympathy of the reader). The Maiden, on the other hand, does not only correct the jeweller's misconceptions springing from his application of worldly rules to the divine realm but also openly criticises him ("Þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle", l. 294), considering his wish to be with her as lunacy ("So madde ȝe be!", l. 290), and is even on the verge of contempt for his ignorance ("I halde þat jueler lyttel to prayse / Þat leuez wel þat he sez wyth yȝe", ll. 301f). The reader is left to observe whether the Dreamer will or will not realise that his "lyttel quene" is no longer a child that belongs to him, but a woman betrothed to the Lamb (whose identity the speaker does not seem fully to comprehend). The narrator's inadequacy to

[100] In her study of dreams in the earliest English literature, Hana Znojemská, for instance, maintains that the way in which Beda Venerabilis presents the oneiric experience of Caedmon, who cannot comprehend the meaning of his vision without a help of learned authorities (*Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* 4. 24), is an effective device for giving the story a dramatic impact (Hana Znojemská, "Brány jinam: Sny v původní anglosaské literatuře", in *Spánek a sny*, ed. Jiří Starý and Josef Hrdlička [Prague: Herrmann a synové, 2008] 209–25 at 217: "Podíváme-li se na tento problém z hlediska vypravěcí techniky, pak jej můžeme číst jako účinný prostředek dramatizace příběhu").

understand the Pearl-Maiden's story culminates in his vain attempt at crossing the river that separates them, ultimately leading to his frustrated awakening.

The irony of the jeweller's failure to receive the message of his own dream is, from the reader's point of view, even greater when his opening ode to the Pearl "plesaunte, to prynces paye / To clanly clos in golde so clere" (ll. 1f) is taken into consideration. When the narrator, having been transported into the dream-world, learns that his waking words have come true and the Pearl-Maiden was indeed crowned queen by the Prince of heaven (ll. 409–20), he suddenly finds the concept unacceptable. The tension between the knowledge and understanding of the fictitious character and the reader of the work lends the text another dimension, which, strictly speaking, could be dispensed with in a doctrinal work, but is a welcome gain for a good narrative. Of all the authors of the period, the *Pearl*-poet seems to be (apart from Chaucer) the one who to the largest extent recognised the potential of the dream as a literary device and – despite the core of his work being a doctrinal message – was also the one who was able to employ it in his narrative technique in a most ingenious and subtle way.

As we have mentioned, besides this spiritual stream of dream-poetry, which goes back – both in terms of content and form – to early and high mediaeval, largely domestic, traditions, there was also a significant body of English dream-visions drawing more directly upon the recent developments in the genre on the Continent. The most prominent author of this strand was Geoffrey Chaucer, whose refined work with oneiric themes and motifs resonated in the literary context of the time and gave birth to a long tradition of English courtly dream-poems (which Spearing calls Chaucerian),[101] lasting as late as the early sixteenth century in the works of authors such as John Clanvowe (1341–1391), John Lydgate (c. 1370–c. 1451), William Dunbar (b. 1459) or Gavin Douglas (c. 1474–1522), to name just a few. Since Chaucer's achievement in the field of dream-visions would deserve a book-length study,[102] any attempt at its summary within no more than several paragraphs

[101] See Spearing 171–218.

[102] In fact, it has received several. Besides the extensive discussions of Chaucer's dream-visions by Spearing and Russell, there is a monograph by James Winny (*Chaucer's Dream-Poems* [London: Catto and Windus, 1973]); chapters devoted to Chaucer are also to be found in Michael D. Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse: Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1987). The intellectual background of Chaucer's dream-poems is discussed by Kathryn Lynch in her study *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000). The relation of Chaucer's dream-poems to the French models is explored in Wimsatt's study and in Haldeen Braddy's *Chaucer and the French Poet Graunson* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, 1947); further sources of the dream-visions are presented and commented upon in B. A. Windeatt's collection. Useful also are introductions and studies in critical editions of Chaucer's dream-poetry, namely Geoffrey Chaucer, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Helen Phillips and Nick Havely (Harlow: Longman, 1997) and idem, *Dream Visions and Other Poems*, ed. Kathryn Lynch (New York: Norton, 2007). Some critical evaluation of Chaucer's dream-vision poetry also frequently appears in

will necessarily be far from comprehensive and ultimately fail to do justice to the works in question. For the purpose of the present discussion, we will, therefore, only focus on some of the main features of Chaucer's dream-poetry in order to demonstrate the poet's contribution to the growth of the genre.

Chaucer's literary canon testifies to his interest in dream-literature throughout the whole of his career as a poet. Besides the already mentioned translations of Boethius's *De consolatione* and the *Romance of the Rose* of uncertain date (both explicitly referred to in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, F ll. 329 and 425), between 1368 and 1372, he wrote his first major poem and first dream-vision, the *Book of the Duchess*, perhaps to commemorate the late Blanche of Lancaster (d. 1368), wife of John of Gaunt (1340–1399); in the mid- or late 1370s, Chaucer composed the highly experimental dream-vision *House of Fame*, which, although unfinished, circulated in manuscripts during his lifetime and did not escape the interest of the early printers; probably for the 1383 celebration of Saint Valentine's Day, he wrote the *Parliament of Fowls*, his formally most refined dream-poem; and, finally, the Prologue to the unfinished collection the *Legend of Good Women*, written in about 1385 (the F version) and revised in about 1394 or later (the G version) is a pseudo-autobiographical story contained in a dream-frame. Moreover, references to dreams and discussions of their significance can be found scattered in other Chaucerian works, most importantly Book V of *Troilus and Criseyde* (mid-1380s) and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales* (1390s).

Although the texts of his dream-poems betray an influence of Continental love-visions, Chaucer's works cannot simply be reduced to that category. Even his first and, in many respects, most conventional dream-poem, the *Book of the Duchess*, treats the love theme in a not-so-conventional manner. At the beginning, the reader encounters the speaker of the poem suffering from insomnia. Unlike the situation in the opening lines of Froissart's *Paradys d'amours* (the chief inspiration of the passage), however, we can only guess whether the cause of the Poet's agony is love, since this question is never directly addressed. Upon reading the story of Alcyone and Ceyx and finally falling asleep, the speaker "wakes up" on a May morning to the sound of birds, which sing "The moste solempne servyse" (l. 302), comparable to "a thing of heven" (l. 308). The Dreamer then finds his chamber-walls decorated with images from Greek mythology, including the couples Paris and Helen, and Jason and Medea, next to which are "bothe text and glose" of the *Romance of the Rose* (l. 333).

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collections of essays on Chaucer, for instance, in Corinne Saunders, ed., *Chaucer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 57–128.

With the thus-defined fictitious scene and intertextual background, the reader might naturally expect a first-hand account of an allegorising romance, in which the narrator will get involved. Instead of that, however, the Dreamer's venture into the forest climaxes in an encounter with a "man in blak" and a subsequent (almost Boethian) exchange with him about the power of Fortune over Man's fate (during which Philosophy's rôle is, surprisingly and rather incompetently, taken over by the Dreamer). Although the Dreamer, having shown intimate acquaintance with classical love-tales, assumes that he can appreciate the Black Knight's grief, the latter insists that his story is different from what the narrator might know from books ("'Ye,' seide he, 'thou nost what thou menest; / I have lost more than thou wenest'", ll. 1137f) – thus, by extension, pointing at the fact that Chaucer's poem is not just another *dit amoureux* either. When the speaker hears the Knight's laconic explanation that "She is deed" (l. 1309), he is in shock and finds it hard to believe that the discourse which he has been having with the man was not about unrequited love, as he naturally thought, but death ("Is that your los?", l. 1310). At this point, the dream – without any further commentary upon the Dreamer's experience – ends. Although love is at the beginning established as the central motif of Chaucer's poem, upon reading the entire narrative, the reader cannot help but feel that it is strangely absent from it, its principal rôle being, as it were, to distract both the Dreamer and the reading audience from the real substance of the tale which they are receiving.

A similar "presence in absence" of love is discernible in Chaucer's two subsequent dream-visions. The story proper of the *House of Fame* is preceded by an account of the story of Dido and Aeneas (see Chapter 1. 4 of the present discussion), inscribed on a tablet in the Temple of Venus. Then Jupiter's eagle descends, grabs the Dreamer (who is, in line 729, explicitly identified as "Geffrey") and takes him on a journey through the heavens. We learn that the Dreamer is a love-poet, who, although having "no tydinges / Of Loves folk […] / Ne of nought elles that God made" (ll. 644–46), has served "so ententifly / His [*i.e.*, Jupiter's] blinde nevew Cupido / And faire Venus also" (ll. 616–18) and that, as a reward "Of [his] labour and devocioun" (l. 666), the eagle will take him to the House of Fame, where he will learn "Of Loves folke mo tydinges, / Both sothe sawes and lesinges" (ll. 675f). When he arrives at the House, however, the Dreamer's expectations are severely undercut: for although he, among other effigies of classical poets, notices "Venus clerk Ovyde" (l. 1487), there is, in fact, very little in the place that would relate to the eagle's promise. When one of the supplicants to Fame asks the speaker what he has come for – to which the narrator replies that he hopes for "Some newe tydings to lere […] / Of love or swiche thinges glade" (ll. 1886, 1889) – Geffrey is told that he needs to go to the House of

Tidings to learn these things. There he, in a corner, finally spots "men [who] of love tydings tolde" (l. 2143). Before he is able to speak with "A man of greet auctoritee" among them (l. 2158), the poem, however, abruptly ends and the Dreamer's search for any love material – as far as the poem's readers are concerned – again ends in frustration.[103]

The narrator of the *Parliament of Fowls* does not know "Love in dede" either (l. 8), but has read enough of it to have an idea of its "cruel yre" and "strokes […] so sore" (ll. 11, 13). When he falls asleep (after reading Cicero's story of Scipio's dream), his dream-guide, Scipio Africanus, brings him to the garden of pleasure, whose gate announces love both as paradise and hell. Spearing reads Chaucer's identification of heaven and hell as one place as "an original variant on the traditional pattern of visions" and suggests that, in terms of material for a poem, the inscriptions on the gate can indicate both a failure of inspiration and poetic creativity.[104] Upon being pushed into the garden, the Dreamer encounters a mixed company of various personifications, including Foolhardiness, Flattery, Meed and Craft (*i.e.*, Cunning: "Disfigured was she, I nil nat lye", l. 222) – that is, non-courtly qualities that would be excluded from the garden of the *Romance*. One of the marvels the Dreamer spots in the place is a temple of brass, the inside of which is hot with lovers' sighs (coming from "the bitter goddesse Jelousye" [l. 252]) and which is presided over by the god Priapus – making the temple, rather than a place of love, a place of unfulfilled sexual frustrations.[105] The sense of non-fulfillment continues even in the central parliament section of the story, when the birds assembled around Nature are supposed to choose their mates: after a lengthy discussion of both courtly and non-courtly love, the beautiful female eagle fails to choose between the three tercel suitors and Nature, who, as the arbiter of the assembly, should impose her will upon the formel, agrees to adjourn the choice by another year. When the Dreamer wakes up to the noise of the birds, he does not seem to be affected by his visionary experience and only expresses a hope that, one day, he will find a book that will cause him to have a better dream.

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[103] There is a question as to whether there might be any ending to the work that would be able to fulfil the Dreamer's wishes and turn the narrative into a conventional dream-poem. Spearing asserts that "it is impossible to imagine any 'love-tiding' that could by now make the poem cohere as a love-vision" (Spearing 79–80). Lynch draws the attention to the unusual length of Book III of the *House* in comparison with the first two books, suggesting that "[b]y all rights of symmetry and proportion, it ought to have ended long before" (Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 81). A suggestion offers itself that, during the process of the writing of the *House of Fame*, the poem got out of hand so much that the author could not think of a suitable closure.

[104] Spearing 93–94.

[105] Priapus, the god of the phallus and gardens, was known from Boccaccio's *Teseide* and Ovid's *Fasti* for his unsuccessful approaches to the nymph Lotis and the virgin Vesta. See Spearing 94.

In a rather comical way, Chaucer himself admits that his dream-poems are not typical love-visions and that his description of love defies the conventions of love-poetry. In the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, the God of Love castigates the Dreamer (who is, again, identified as Chaucer himself), declaring that, through his works, the poet is the god's foe for making war upon all his servants and hindering them from their devotion, and claiming "it folye / To serve Love" (ll. 324f). Indeed, Lynch draws attention to Chaucer's peculiar way of treating the genre. She prefers to consider his poems as members of the subgenre which she calls "philosophical vision" – a category, which, in her words, "focus[es] on the psychological journey of a Dreamer or visionary as he confronts abstract representations of aspects of his own spiritual and psychological condition".[106] Each of the poems, Lynch argues, has an underlying philosophical plane which seems to be at the centre of the author's interest: in the case of the *Duchess*, it is, for instance, Ockhamist epistemology, a commonplace of the late fourteenth-century philosophical discourse that pervades the mode of conversation between the Dreamer and the Black Knight. Similarly, the *Parliament*, in its focus on the process of choosing rather than the choice itself, seems to scrutinise the question of free will, another lively subject of late mediaeval intellectual debates.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that, in the opening stanzas of the *Parliament*, the speaker, in order "a certeyn thing to lerne" (l. 20), engages himself in the reading of Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, which, as we have mentioned, was considered as a paragon of doctrinal vision, handling "sacred matters". Chaucer was therefore very much acquainted with the potential doctrinal function of literary visions and it is perhaps through its prism that his courtly dream-poems should be considered – as a unique mixture of genres which works on several levels. Chaucer's tendency to rework extensively the source material in his dream-poetry has also been commented upon by Saunders, who has argued that "he expands and rewrites them into something entirely new, at once classical, medieval and idiosyncratic".[107]

Besides the overturning of the reader's expectations of courtly dream-poetry, two more aspects of Chaucer's dream-visions are often mentioned as something markedly Chaucerian. The first of them is the strong link between dreams and literature. Stories – just as dreams – need to be carefully read and interpreted in order to be understood. In all four of Chaucer's dream-visions (if we include the Prologue to the *Legend*), the narrator-

[106] Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, 33.
[107] Corinne Saunders, ed., *Chaucer*, 59.

Dreamer is somehow affiliated with the profession of a poet. In *Fame* and the *Legend*, it is Chaucer himself (of course, appropriately stylised and embellished) who assumes the rôle of the lyrical subject, whereas in the *Duchess*, the unnamed speaker tells his reading audience, at the end of his dream-report, that he is going to "putte this sweven in ryme" (l. 1332).[108] At the end of the proem to the *Parliament*, the narrator, likewise, asks Venus to give him strength "to ryme and endyte" so that he might finish the account of his oneiric experience (l. 119). The resulting poem is thus always presented as a tangible form of a dream, in which the work of art has found its inspiration (this is most obvious in the Prologue to the *Legend*, which lends the dream-inspiration status not just to the Prologue itself, but to all subsequent stories of the collection). But, just as the reader cannot properly distinguish between the Poet and the Dreamer, the boundaries between an oneiric experience and a work of poetry remain blurred. The speaker of the *Parliament* does not tell us at one point that he has begun to write a poem – he "began [his] sweven for to wryte" (l. 118), indicating that no such distinction is applicable to his work. Similarly, the narrator of the *Duchess*, on the very last line of his tale, informs us that "This was [his] sweven; now it is doon" (l. 1334), subtly playing with the possible double-meaning of the word "doon". The dream might be "done" in terms of its retelling, but also in the sense of its transformation into writing.

The movement from a dream to a narrative in Chaucer's dream-poems, however, usually starts with old authoritative books. With the exception of the Prologue to the *Legend*, each of the dream-visions is prefaced with an account of a story from a classical work: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the *Duchess*, Virgil's *Aeneid* in *Fame*, and Cicero's *De re publica* (of which only a small section was, in fact, known in the Middle Ages, preserved through Macrobius's *Commentary*) in the *Parliament*. Helen Phillips argues that Chaucer invented this device in order to problematise the relationship between experience and authority, which seems to be one of the central topics lying at the heart of Chaucer's dream-poetry.[109] Chaucer's narrators all have lacunas in their life-experience, which they try and fill with knowledge gained from books. Although the Dreamer of the *Parliament* does not know about love, "Yet happeth [him] ful ofte in books rede / Of his [*i.e.*, Love's] miracles" (ll. 10f). Furthermore, the speaker of the *Legend* goes so far as to assert that the lore of the books is in fact of equal – if not greater – value than first-hand experience,

[108] The editor William Thynne, in the first collected printed edition of Chaucer's works (1532), called *The Book of the Duchess* "The Dreame of Chaucer", which might indicate that Chaucer's early readers considered the persona of the narrator of his dream-poems to be identical with the author even in the cases when the speaker's identity remains, strictly speaking, obscure.

[109] See Helen Phillips, "Chaucer's Love Visions", in *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 414–34 at 418.

suggesting that "Wel ought us than honouren and beleve / These bookes, ther we han noon other preve" (ll. 27f). When Jupiter's eagle, in Book II of *Fame*, offers to show Geffrey all the stars mentioned by ancient poets, he declines, saying that he "leve[s] as wel […] / Hem that wryte of this matere, / As though [he] knew hir places here" (ll. 1012–14). In spite of these proclamations, however, the empirical author Chaucer never authenticates books' prevalence over life's experience. It might even seem that, by letting them pronounce these lines, Chaucer leaves his poetic alter-egos at the mercy of his readers' own judgement: What point is there for the narrator of the *Parliament*, who has probably never found a real satisfaction in books and who has just been disappointed by another one, to pursue knowledge in yet more books? And can the speaker of the Prologue of the *Legend* really undo his previous folly of writing incompetently about love by producing more love stories from the same old sources, without gaining any first-hand experience of love? If we return to our previous observation about the close link between literature and dreams in Chaucer's dream-visions, we might say that the authority of literature as a privileged source of knowledge enjoys an equally ambiguous status as dreams themselves, in this particular respect, do.

With this analogy in mind, we are getting to the last feature of Chaucerian dream-poetry to be addressed here, which is also perhaps the most pertinent point for our discussion – namely Chaucer's treatment of oneiric phenomena. As we hinted at when discussing the *Romance of the Rose*, it was not uncommon in mediaeval dream-poetry to make use of dream not just as a literary device, but also to acknowledge its status outside the sphere of literature. To produce an air of authenticity, Guillaume de Lorris refers, at the beginning of his work, to Macrobius, one of the greatest mediaeval authorities on dream-lore, who "wrote of the vision of King Scipio [escrist l'avision / qui avint au roi Scipion]"[110] (for more details about Macrobian dream-lore, see Chapter 2. 1). In the hope of raising the epistemological prestige of his dream-allegory, however, Guillaume convicts himself of ignorance of Macrobius's writing: it was Marcus Tullius Cicero who wrote about Scipio's vision, whilst Macrobius of Daldis only produced a commentary upon Cicero's work. Moreover, Scipio was not a king, but a Roman general who, in Cicero's story, meets the Numidian King Masinissa.[111] As has been repeatedly pointed out by literary criticism,

[110] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, 31 = ll. 9f.

[111] Guillaume's formula was almost word-by-word adopted by the early Chaucer, who, in the introductory section to the *Duchess*, mentions Macrobius as "He that wroot al th'avisioun / That he mette, King Scipioun" (ll. 285f). Moreover, the author apparently conflates Scipio with his grandfather, calling Scipio the Younger "The noble man, the Affrican" (l. 287). In *Fame*, Chaucer repeats Guillaume's mistake again, making a

upon a close examination, mediaeval dream-visions, in fact, generally betray very little of the actual dream theory of the time (beyond commonplaces such as that dreams might come from on high) and their references to oneirocritical authorities are largely formulaic.[112]

Chaucer, however, seems to be an exception to the rule. Although his dropping of names is not so different from that of Guillaume, the overall design of his dream-poems, the arrangement of individual images and motifs, and – most importantly – the comments upon the question of the origin and value of dreams, show the author's interest in contemporary dream psychology.[113] It was probably George Lyman Kittredge who first noted that, whereas, in most dream-poems of Chaucer's predecessors, dreams are "a mere device to get the reader into a sort of fairyland" and there is "no attempt to reproduce the actual phenomena of dreams", Chaucer's works testify to the author's "strong sense of fact".[114] Some sixty years later,[115] James Winny, without hesitation, identifies this "sense" as an "intellectual interest in the theory of dreams and dream interpretation",[116] followed by Spearing, who calls it an "interest in dream-psychology".[117]

If we stay at the *Book of the Duchess* (the occasion of Kittredge's remark), we can observe a deliberate uncertainty as to the status of the fictitious dream of the poem, which Chaucer builds from the opening lines. The introduction of a restless narrator, who suffers from insomnia and is full of "melancolye / And drede" (ll. 23f) of death (recognising sleep as a necessary condition of life), might suggest that the following dream has a bodily origin, since melancholy people were believed to be more prone to nightmares. However, when the speaker recounts a story from Ovid, of Alcyone mourning the death of her husband Ceyx, a psychological link between the content of the story and content of the dream of the Black Knight mourning the death of his wife is established, arousing a

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mention of "the king, Daun Scipio" (l. 916). Only in the *Parliament* does the narrator present an accurate image of Cicero's story, even attributing it to its proper author ("This book of which I make mencioun, / Entitled was al ther, as I shal telle, / 'Tullius of the dreme of Scipioun'", ll. 29–31).

[112] See, for instance, Alison M. Peden, "Macrobius and Mediaeval Dream Literature", *Medium Ævum* 54 (1985): 59–73; or C. H. L. Bodehnam, "The Nature of the Dream in Late Mediaeval French Literature", *Medium Ævum* 54 (1985): 74–86. Bodehnam argues that, although not containing Macrobian dream-lore, the *Romance* might be read in the context of Aristotelian oneiric teaching, which was, by the thirteenth century, more popular.

[113] I am taking the liberty of using the term "psychology" here for the sake of clarity, although the word was, of course, unknown in Chaucer's times. It first appeared in the English language in the mid-seventeenth century, meaning "pneumatology" (first used as such in 1654 according to *OED*), and entered the English lexicon in its present sense only as late as the mid-eighteenth century (first occurrence in 1749). See "psychology, *n.*", *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989, *OED Online* (Oxford UP), 24 Jul 2012 <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

[114] George Lyman Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1936) 67–68.

[115] Kittredge's book is a volume of lectures delivered in 1914.

[116] Winny 13.

[117] Spearing 59.

possibility that the dream comes from the speaker's waking preoccupations. Finally, just before he falls asleep, the narrator offers a prayer to Morpheus and Juno, asking them to grant him some rest. His dream, therefore, might be a celestial vision.[118] This dilemma, based on an acknowledged and universally shared pre-modern typology of real dreams, gives the poem a strong dramatic impulse, engaging the reader in the work's greatest intellectual enigma: is the dream of the knight worthy of trust and any deeper analysis, or was it just a vain vision? Unfortunately, as we have stated before, Chaucer provides no definitive answers to such questions and, at the end of the poem, the reader learns nothing more than the terse fact that "This was my [*i.e.*, the Dreamer's] sweven".

That dreams may have various sources, whose precise identification is problematic, and various implications, is explicitly discussed in the proem to the *House of Fame*. The narrator distinguishes between six types of dreams, including *avisioun*, *revelacioun*, *drem*, *sweven*, *fantom* and *oracle*. At the same time, however, he claims ignorance as to their origin and significance – men can only hope that "the holy roode / Turne us every drem to goode" (ll. 57f). The speaker of the *Parliament* is, likewise, torn between two possibilities: that his dream of Scipio Africanus, which he is going to narrate in retrospect, was a *somnium animale*, so to speak, caused by his previous reading about Africanus, or a *somnium coeleste*, similar to that which Scipio the Younger experienced. When offering the first option, the narrator gives his readers perhaps the most concise delineation of a specific type of dreams in the Chaucerian canon:

> The wery huntere slepinge in his bed
> To wode ageyn his minde goth anoon;
> The juge dremeth how his plees been sped;
> The carter dremeth how his cartes goon;
> The riche, of gold; the knight fight with his foon;
> The seke met he drinketh of the tonne;
> The lover met he hath his lady wonne.
> (ll. 99–105)

As we will see in Chapter 2, this passage – as if taken from Mercutio's Queen Mab speech – is based on actual dream tenets, whose literary and scientific representation dates back to the classical period. The narrator, however, is not completely convinced by this explanation, saying, "Can I nat seyn if that the cause were / For I had red of Affrican before, / That made me to mete that he stood there" (ll. 106–8) – for there is another, equally plausible, possibility, namely that the dream was sent to him by Venus, whom the

[118] Walter Clyde Curry traces these three main classes of dreams according to their causes in mediaeval scientific discourse, where they were usually called *somnium naturale* (bodily dream), *somnium animale* (dream incited by perturbation of the mind) and *somnium coeleste* (supernatural dream). See Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960) 207.

speaker calls a “blissful lady swete” (l. 113), expressing a conviction that it was she who made him “this sweven for to mete” (l. 115). It is precisely this dual character of dreams – generating tension and dramatic uncertainty – that was later adopted by early modern dramatists for their own dramaturgical ends. One example of a later employment of the topos is an exchange about the types of dreams and their veracity between Duke Alphonso and the Ambassador of Brunswick in the anonymous Elizabethan play *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll* (1599–1600):

> *Amb.* But dreames (my lord) you know growe by the humors
> Of the moist night, which store of vapours lending
> Vnto our stomaches when we are in sleepe,
> And to the bodies supreame parts ascending,
> Are thence sent back by coldnesse of the braine,
> And these present our idle phantasies
> With nothing true, but what our labouring soules
> Without their actiue organs, falselie worke.
> *Alp.* My lord, know you, there are two sorts of dreams,
> One sort of whereof are onely phisicall,
> And such are they whereof your Lordship speakes,
> The other Hiper-phisicall: that is,
> Dreames sent from heauen, or from wicked fiends,
> Which nature doth not forme of her owne power,
> But are extrinsecate, by maruaile wrought[.][119]

It would be false, however, to assume that Chaucer’s dream-poems grow out of scientific theories of the time: that would be against the fundamentals of mediaeval fiction and any good art. Mediaeval dream-visions are primarily part of a strong literary, rather than scientific, tradition. Nevertheless, dream theories seem to have given Chaucer a stimulus, and opened new possibilities, to shape the story-content of his poems in a particular way, be it establishing a unity between motifs of waking parts of a poem and the dream itself, as mentioned by Spearing,[120] or giving his stories special verisimilitude, as asserted by Curry.[121] For our discussion, it is especially important that Chaucer established the precedent of a link between dream-fiction and the intellectual context in which it was written. By the late Middle Ages, the tradition of discussing dreams was obviously strong enough to penetrate the realm of belles-lettres, where it – in some form – remained deeply rooted for centuries to follow. More than any of his predecessors, Chaucer makes it obvious that, for an informed reading of literary dreams and a responsible analysis of their authors’ intentions, at least basic knowledge of not only literary, but also intellectual, tradition is desirable, if not necessary.

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[119] *The Wisdome of Doctor Dodypoll* (London: Thomas Creede for Richard Olive, 1600) sigs. D1$^{v}$, l. 31–D2$^{r}$, l. 13.

[120] See Spearing 57.

[121] See Curry 234.

## 1. 10 Dreams in Early Modern English Fiction before Shakespeare

Since the question of dreams in non-dramatic Elizabethan fiction was, to an extent, addressed by a relatively recent study by Derek B. Alwes,[122] we shall only focus here on the most significant instances of the trope in early modern English writings before Shakespeare (some of which will be elaborated upon in the discussion of Shakespearian drama in chapters to follow) and mention some of their features omitted by Alwes's study. Examples of the use of dreams in pre-Shakespearian English drama will be provided, and commented upon, within the discussion of the handling of the motif in Shakespeare's plays.

To a significant extent, dreams in early Renaissance English fiction represent a continuum with the mediaeval tradition of dream-literature, which was, by the sixteenth century, strong enough to provide early modern authors with an array of conventional employments of the topos that they could make use of and further elaborate. One early example of a work with significant dream-sequences is *The Mirror for Magistrates* (compiled in 1555, reaching its sixth edition in 1610), a collection of poems about the lives and falls of historical English worthies. The prose section of the 1559 edition, introducing the story of "Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York" ("Prose 12"), tells the reader how William Baldwin, one of the authors and editors of the work, reads, in a Chaucerian manner, old Chronicles, "fynding styl fyelde vpon fyelde, & manye noble men slayne" (ll. 56f).[123] Since Baldwin is weary, he "began in dede to slumber" and his imagination, "styll prosecutyng this tragicall matter, brought [him] such a fantasy" (ll. 57–59). In his dream, Baldwin encounters "a tall mans body full of fresshe woundes, but lackyng a head" (ll. 60f). The man turns out to be Duke Richard, who starts narrating his story. Only after Richard finishes, George Ferres, another author of the original *Mirror* (c. 1500–1579), wakes Baldwin up and has a discourse with him about the nature of dreams, mentioning that it is good that his colleague dreamed about Richard, since he surely belongs to their collection. The reader is presented with a conventional dream, stirred by previous reading, which results in a written work – this time, however, not allowing a supernatural explanation (the dream episode serves as a link between stories proper and does not need to attract much attention to itself by being overly enigmatic). A similar device with the ghost of the central figure of a story is used in the opening stanzas of "King James the

[122] See Derek B. Alwes, "Elizabethan Dreaming: Fictional Dreams from Gascoigne to Lodge", in *Framing Elizabethan Fictions: Contemporary Approaches to Early Modern Narrative Prose*, ed. Constance C. Relihan (Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1996) 153–67.

[123] *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1938) 181.

Fourth" (in the 1587 edition), where a dream is sent to the narrator by the god Morpheus (l. 3). Despite its divine provenance, however, this oneiric episode does not significantly differ from its predecessor and does not have any ambitions to surpass the convention of a literary dream-frame.

Due to its prevalently tragic content, the *Mirror* also provides ideal material for dream prophecies which play an active part in the contained stories. An excellent example is Lord Stanley's warning to the eponymous hero of the tale of "Lord Hastings" – an episode also present in Shakespeare's *Richard III* (although Shakespeare's version was modelled after the accounts of contemporary chronicles rather than the story in the *Mirror*; see Chapter 3. 2). At midnight, Hastings receives a messenger from Lord Stanley with the following warning:

> Hastynges away. in slepe the Gods foreshew
> By dreadfull dreame, fell fates vto vs two.
> Me thought a Boare with tuske so rased our throate,
> That both our shoulders of the bloud dyd smoake.
> Aryse to horse, strayght homewarde let vs hye.
> And syth our foe we may not mate, o flye.
> Of Chaunteclere you learne dreames sooth to know.
> Thence wysemen conster, more then the Cock doth crow.
> (ll. 385–92)

Especially the last two verses of the stanza are of great interest for establishing the literary source of the topos: Chauntecleer, whose example Hastings should follow, is a rooster-hero of Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale", whose dream predicts his impending death by a fox. Chauntecleer's wife, Pertelote, however, explains the dream away, attributing it to the rooster's bodily processes and showing general disbelief in prophetic dreams. Lulled into false security, Chauntecleer ultimately does face the mortal danger, which he only narrowly manages to escape. The fable was widely known among early modern English audiences[124] and Chauntecleer and Pertelote's exchange about the validity of dreams became a paragon for a number of dramatic situations in Elizabethan plays (see Chapter 3 on prophecies in Shakespearian drama). This is why the author of "Lord Hastings" could mention the names of the story's protagonists in passing and expect his readers immediately to place the situation in the appropriate context. The irony, therefore, must have been recognised by the original reading audience when Lord Hastings spurned the message, saying that "On [his] part pledeth as well dame Pertelott" (l. 404).

[124] Chaucer was considered as a kind of authority on dreams throughout the sixteenth and seventeen centuries and especially the "Nun's Priest's Tale" was being mentioned as a source of dream lore (see *Merry Tales, Wittie Questions and Quicke Answeres* [London: Henry Wykes, 1567] sig. B7$^{r–v}$ or Thomas Walkington, *The Optick Glasse of Humors* [London: John Windet for Martin Clerke, 1607] sigs. L2$^{v}$–L3$^{r}$).

Another major English work of the period, showing the author's literary interest in dreams and a remarkable ingenuity in their employment, is *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1580s) by Philip Sidney (1554–1586). Book II records an elaborate nightmare of Gynecia:

> [I]t seemed unto her to be in a place full of thorns which so molested her as she could neither abide standing still nor tread safely going forward. In this case she thought Cleophila, being upon a fair hill, delightful to the eye and easy in appearance, called her thither; but thither with such anguish being come, Cleophila was vanished, and she found nothing but a dead body, which seeming at the first with a strange smell to infect her as she was ready to die likewise, within a while the dead body (she thought) took her in his arms and said, "Gynecia, here is thy only rest."[125]

The dream-allegory works on two levels within the story: first, it illustrates Gynecia's lust for Pyrocles ("Cleophila"), an important element for the further development of the plot; secondly, it foreshadows the climactic scene of Book IV, when Gynecia has sexual intercourse with her own husband, Basilius, thinking that he is "Cleophila". The morning after the act, Gynecia learns the true identity of her lover – who, accidentally, drinks a potion which Gynecia has brought for "Cleophila" and apparently dies. Gynecia is subsequently charged with the murder of her husband, for which the punishment is death.[126] In Book V, this dream is complemented by yet another nightmare of Gynecia, revealing her bad conscience (see Chapter 2. 4 for a more detailed discussion of the episode). Sidney's use of dream shows that the author recognised the versatility and potential power of the motif in a structure of a literary work and decided to make the most of it: the first oneiric episode in the *Arcadia* creates suspense and gives the audience some sense as to the advancement of the central plot of the story, producing the atmosphere of an approaching tragedy. The second one gives an insight into Gynecia's inner world, leaving it up to readers to decide whether her deed deserves to be punished or whether her repentance might clear her from guilt, before the real judgement is passed. On the whole, Sidney's employment of the motif is perhaps the most dramatically sensitive one in pre-Shakespearian Elizabethan fiction and in many ways prefigures the established functions which dreams gained in dramatic genres about a decade after Sidney had written his work.

As to other works of prose fiction, dream sequences with various rôles appear in *The Adventures of Master F. J.* (1573) by George Gascoigne (c. 1535–1577), where two feigned dreams serve as a communication device in amorous rites between the eponymous

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[125] Sir Philip Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 102–103.

[126] In the revised version of his work, the *New Arcadia*, Sidney is more direct as to the identity of the corpse in the dream, saying that Gynecia "found nothing but a dead body – like unto her husband" (Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, ed. Victor Skretkowicz [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987] 277).

F. J. and madam Frances; in *Gwydonius, the Carde of Fancy* (1584) by Robert Greene (1558–1592), likewise, Gwydonius confides to his beloved Castania a dream betraying his passionate intentions; and more fabricated visions are to be found in *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) by Thomas Nashe (1567–c. 1601) and *A Margarite of America* (1596) by Thomas Lodge (c. 1558–1625). Alwes comments upon the frequency of the trope of a false dream in Eizabethan fiction, connecting the problematic status of literary dreams with the problematic status of the phenomenon in Elizabethan cultural awareness.[127]

The use of dreams as a frame-device for exploring serious matters, however, still enjoyed considerable popularity in the late sixteenth century: towards the end of his life, Robert Greene produced several pamphlets of this sub-genre, including *Orpharion* (1589), *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592), and *Vision* (1592). In the last of the mentioned works, the dream frame allows Greene to bring back to life Chaucer and Gower, two great figures of English poetry, to let them argue over what is valuable literature and what is not. The discourse is ended by an intervention of King Solomon, who asserts that the only supreme value is theology. Similarly, *Kind-Heart's Dream* (1592) by Henry Chettle (c. 1564–c. 1607) opens in a vision, in which five apparitions (including Robert Greene or the Elizabethan actor Richard Tarleton) give the eponymous figure complaints about various social abuses, upon which Chettle satirically elaborates, using the dream as a cover against controversy.

A special mention is deserved by Greene's *A Maiden's Dream* (1591), a eulogy upon the late Christopher Hatton, Lord Chancellor of England (1540–1591), dedicated to Hatton's niece, Elizabeth. The poem, written in Chaucerian rhyme-royal stanzas, records a dream, in which an unnamed narrator finds Hatton's dead body lying on the ground in an idealised, sunny landscape at a stream, and becomes a witness of a group of allegorical figures (such as Justice, Prudence, or Wisdom) mourning the great loss. Apart from its pathetic tone and heavily formulaic nature (Hatton's bravery is, at one point, compared to Gaius Mucius Scaevola's and Greene even introduces a procession of English aristocrats, whose "teares and sighs some *Homer's* quil desir'd" [l. 299; original italics]),[128] the poem would offer nothing worthy of any special attention – were it not for the handful of clues at the end of the text, indicating that the Dreamer is none other than Queen Elizabeth herself. In the epistle dedicatory, Greene attracts readers' attention to the possible hidden meaning behind

[127] See Alwes 160–61.

[128] Robert Greene, *A Maidens Dreame*, in *The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene*, Vol. 2, ed. J. Churton Collins (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1905) 221–35.

the dream's allegory, claiming, "I drewe a fiction called A Maidens Dreame, which as it is *Enigmaticall*, so it is not without some speciall and considerate reasons".[129]

Connecting Queen Elizabeth with the world of dreams – although usually as a subject or the begetter of the dream, not the Dreamer – was a literary commonplace and almost a distinct sub-genre of sixteenth-century English dream-fiction.[130] During her procession through Norwich in 1578, Elizabeth received several panegyric performances, including a song under the gate at the market-place. The lyrics begin with a formula, "From slumber softe I fell aslepe, / From sleepe to dreame, from dreame to depe delight",[131] going on to describe a vision in which goddesses Juno, Venus, Diana, Ceres, Pallas, and Minerva argue over which of them might "claime the highest place above".[132] The discussion is interrupted by Jove, who claims that

> In equall place I have assignde you all:
> A Soveraign Wight there is that beareth life,
> In whose sweete hart I have inclosde you all.
> Of England soyle she is the Soveraigne Queene,
> Your vigors there do florish fresh and greene.[133]

This mythologising aura of the Queen is further elaborated upon in *The Honour of the Garter* (1593), a dream-vision written by George Peele (1556–1596), which gives an account of a dream of the knights of St. George's Order, containing an image of "a Virgin Queene, attyrde in white, / Leading with her a sort of goodly Knights" (ll. 320f),[134] who looks as if the real Queen Elizabeth of the waking world "Had clymed the clowdes, and been in person there" (l. 329), and to whom "the earth, the sea, and elements / Auspicious are" (ll. 330f). George Chapman (1559–1634), in his poetic diptych *The Shadow of Night* (1594), associates (as was common at the time) the Queen with Night, "our empress",[135] and Cynthia, "Enchantress […] / Circled with charms and incantation".[136] Although neither of the hymns in the *Shadow* is presented as a fictional dream, a special magical authority and power of Night over human dreams is explicitly acknowledged.

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[129] Greene, *A Maidens Dreame*, 224. (Original italics.)

[130] The subject of dreams of the Queen in Elizabethan cultural milieu has been touched upon by Louis Adrian Montrose's essay "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture", *Representations* 1: 2 (1983): 61–94, and, more recently, Helen Hackett's chapter "Dream-Visions of Elizabeth I", in *Reading the Early-Modern Dream*, 45–65. The following section of my discussion partly draws upon these two studies.

[131] John Nichols, *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth*, Vol. 2 (London: John Nichols, 1823) 149.

[132] Nichols 150.

[133] Ibid.

[134] George Peele, *The Honour of the Garter*, in *The Life and Works of George Peele*, Vol. 1, gen. ed. Charles Tyler Prouty (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1952) 245–59.

[135] George Chapman, *The Shadow of Night*, in *The Works of George Chapman*, Vol. 2, intr. Algernon Charles Swinburne (London: Chatto and Windus, 1875) 1–18 at 9.

[136] Ibid.

The cult of Elizabeth, which transformed the image of the Queen into both a sovereign prince and a virginal nymph, was constantly opening the question of the Queen's desirability as a woman, which permeated Elizabethan fiction. Hackett argues that dreams and fantasies provided a legitimate communicative space for the safe exploring of such a notion, which sometimes even bore a strong political undertone (a touch or a kiss of the Queen could be read as the ruler's favour towards her subject).[137] A well-known example of such an episode is Book I of *The Faerie Queene* (1590) by Edmund Spenser (c. 1552–1599), in which Prince Arthur dreams of spending a night with the Queen of Fairies, whom Elizabethan readers readily associated with their Queen:

> For wearied with my sportes, I did alight
> From loftie steed, and downe to sleep me layd;
> The verdant gras my couch did goodly dight,
> And pillow was my helmett fayre displayd:
> Whiles every sense the humour sweet embayd,
> And slombring soft my hart did steale away
> Me seemed, by my side a royall Mayd
> Her daintie limbes full softly down did lay:
> So fayre a creature yet saw neuer sunny day.
>
> Most goodly glee and lovely blandishment
> She to me made, and badd me love her deare;
> For dearly sure her love was to me bent,
> As when just time expired should appeare.
> But whether dreames delude, or true it were,
> Was never hart so ravisht with delight,
> Ne living man like wordes did ever heare,
> As she to me delivered all that night;
> And at her parting said, She Queene of Faries hight.
> (1. 9. 13–14)[138]

Even within the framework of a dream, which, as we have argued, granted authors a certain freedom of expression, Spenser was apparently careful when approaching the subject of intimacy with the Queen and, despite the scene's erotic content, manages to present the situation with decorum. The reader can only guess what the Prince means by the "goodly glee" and "lovely blandishment", or to what extent the experience is just his fantasy. After all, immediately after the description of the love-scene, the narrator hastens to inform the audience that some dreams are true and some deluding, without, however, suggesting which one this was. When the Prince awakes, he sees the spot beside him empty, but can also discern "pressed gras where she had lyen" (1. 9. 15). Just as dreams may or may not tell the truth, there are, in the end, equal chances that the amorous night both did and did not take place.

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[137] See Hackett 46.

[138] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene, Book One*, ed. Carol V. Kaske (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006).

Love for the Queen and a pursuit of her grace form the central theme of the dramatic allegory *Endymion, the Man in the Moon* (late 1580s), a play by John Lyly (c. 1553–1606) containing important sleep and dream episodes (see also Chapter 3. 4 of the present study). At the beginning, the eponymous hero of the play confides, to his comrade Eumenides, of his love for Cynthia, the Moon. Eumenides, however, has little understanding of his friend's affections. He advises him to "Cease off […] to feed so much upon fancies", adding that Endymion's "melancholy blood must be purged which draweth [him] to a dotage no less miserable than monstrous" (1. 1. 28–30).[139] Thus he effectively relegates Endymion's feelings from the domain of waking thoughts to the uncanny realm of dreams, maintaining that "Sleep would do thee [*i.e.*, Endymion] more good than speech" (ll. 78f).

Like the real Queen Elizabeth, who, according to the official Tudor concept of kingship, had both the immortal "body political" and the corruptible "body natural",[140] Lyly's Cynthia is of an essentially dual character. At first, she is presented as a goddess, divorced from humans and their emotions: when Eumenides tries to dissuade his friend from his foolish feelings, he claims that it is "so peevish to imagine the moon either capable of affection or shape of a mistress" (ll. 23f), since "things immortal are not subject to affections" (ll. 9f). When, however, Endymion's former beloved, Tellus, attempts to achieve the same thing, she stresses Cynthia's mortal aspect, rendering her as not-so-much-different from any other women:

> *Tellus.* Why, she is but a woman.
> *Endymion.* No more was Venus.
> *Tellus.* She is but a virgin.
> *Endymion.* No more was Vesta.
> *Tellus.* She shall have an end.
> *Endymion.* So shall the world.
> *Tellus.* Is not her beauty subject of time?
> *Endymion.* No more than time is to standing still.
> *Tellus.* Wilt thou make her immortal?
> *Endymion.* No, but incomparable.
> (2. 2. 89–98)

That this paradoxical, in a way, self-denying concept of a sovereign resonated with Elizabethan audiences, making the Queen a dignified, yet very much desirable, subject of dreams, can be illustrated by a real oneiric experience recorded by the astrologer Simon Forman on 23rd of January, 1597. In his dream, he saw himself walking with Queen

[139] John Lyly, *Endymion*, ed. David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996).
[140] On the concept of the King's "two bodies", its development, and employment in Shakespearian drama, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957).

Elizabeth, "a little elderly woman".[141] Although the Queen was almost sixty-four at the time of Forman's dream and far too high above his status, he dreamed of telling her he would like to make her pregnant. "[M]ethought she began to love me," continues Forman's account. "And when we were alone, out of sight, methought she would have kissed me".[142] At this point, Forman awoke.

A fantasy of being kissed by the Queen, which, as Montrose asserts, "was obviously not Forman's alone",[143] is ultimately shared by Endymion as well. After forty years of sleep, into which he was plunged by the jealous Tellus with the help of a sorceress named Dipsas, he is approached by Cynthia (the only person able to break the spell), who for a while assumes the rôle of a lover, without, however, ceasing to embody her own myth:

> [*Cynthia.*] I will not be so stately, good Endymion, not to stoop to do thee good; and if thy liberty consist in a kiss from me, thou shalt have it. And although my mouth hath been heretofore as untouched as my thoughts, yet now to recover thy life (though to restore thy youth it be impossible), I will do that to Endymion which yet never mortal man could boast of heretofore, nor shall ever hope for hereafter. *She kisses him.*
> (5. 1. 21–29)

Although the kiss does really take place in the fictitious world in the play, for Endymion, it remains a mere fantasy, of which he later has no recollection. Hackett stresses that the intimate contact between the Queen and a commoner is something "possible only *in* fantasy, ultimately reinforcing the distance between subject and monarch".[144] The dream, as employed by Lyly, thus becomes not only a world in which certain rules of the daytime reality can be suspended, but also a prism through which events of the play need to be looked upon and interpreted. Once more we encounter a situation when the line between dream and literature becomes less distinct, as if the two concepts merged into a singular enigmatic experience. After all, this diffusion is acknowledged by Lyly himself in the Prologue to *Endymion*, which, although giving an apology for its story-content, lays most importance on the play's peculiar form:

> It was forbidden in old time to dispute of chimera, because it was a fiction. We hope in our times none will apply pastimes, because they are fancies; for there liveth none under the sun that knows what to make of the Man in the Moon. We present neither comedy, nor tragedy, nor story, nor anything, but that whosoever heareth may say this: 'Why, here is a tale of the Man in the Moon.'
> (Prologue, 6–12)

[141] Montrose 62.
[142] Montrose 63.
[143] Montrose 65.
[144] Hackett 52. (Original italics.)

Fantasies about Queen Elizabeth, veiled by the allegory of dreams, can also be found in Shakespeare's dramatic canon, namely in his early comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Shakespeare's play, the Queen enters the story in two different forms, complementing each other. The more obvious one is Titania, queen of fairies, who was, like Cynthia, another popular mythical figure commonly associated with Elizabeth.[145] Her love-affair with the asinine Bottom the Weaver seems, on the one hand, to be far from Cynthia's noble kissing of Endymion, but, on the other hand, shares at least one important feature with it: when Bottom wakes up, the experience remains just a dream for him. Even with Bottom's vivid imagination, attested by his previous presence on the stage, he would never think that he might actually spend a night with the Queen of Fairies and, without a long hesitation, attributes the events of the previous night to nocturnal fancies. Just as the intimacy between Cynthia and Endymnion is something "never mortal man could boast of", so, in the case of Bottom's adventure, "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what [his] dream was" (4. 1. 204–206).

The other of the two apparent depictions of the Queen in Shakespeare's play is the royal virgin from Oberon's story, who manages to avoid Cupid's arrow and majestically leaves the scene, untouched by amorous affections:

> *Oberon.* That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth
> Cupid all armed. A certain aim he took
> At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
> And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quenched in the chaste beams of the wat'ry moon,
> And the imperial vot'ress passèd on,
> In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
> Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
> It fell upon a little western flower –
> Before, milk-white; now purple with love's wound –
> And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
> (2. 1. 155–68)

Although – unlike Titania – the "fair vestal" (cf. Endymion's analogous comparison of the virginal Cynthia to Vesta) does not directly participate in the dream-like course of events of the main plot of the play, she, nevertheless, remains at its centre. As Montrose stresses, "[s]he is necessarily excluded from the erotic world of which her own chastity is the efficient cause"[146] – were it not for her escaping the amorous rites of Cupid, none of the action of the main plot would be possible. Neither Hermia and Lysander, nor Helena and

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[145] See Hackett 60.
[146] Montrose 82.

Demetrius, could be united, the dispute between Oberon and Titania would probably not have an easy solution, and Bottom the Weaver could not end up in the arms of the Fairy Queen. Inaccessible herself, the mythicising presence of the Queen provides the crucial impetus for the vortex of passions that is to take place, effectively making her a symbolical patron of the affections, above which she herself stays. Furthermore, similarly to the Prologue to *Endymion*, the mischievous elf Robin Goodfellow does not forget to classify the *whole* action of the play as "No more yielding but a dream" (l. 6), just in case the audience have taken some offence by its potentially controversial theme.[147]

With this single example of Shakespeare's affiliation with the previous tradition of employing dreams in literature, we shall conclude this – by no means exhaustive – excursus and, before the discussion proper, offer a brief summary of the main points which we have so far observed.

Even at the pre-written stages of literary fiction, sleep and dreams were considered as a staple part of a narrative. Authors quickly discovered their potential as a technical component of the story, allowing them to provide, in an economical form, the audience with the knowledge necessary for an understanding of the plot, and the plot itself with motivation for its advancement. As the centuries of development shifted literature's focus solely from the plot to individual characters as well, the expository focus of these topoi widened to include fictive protagonists and their inner lives.

Although later authors of dream-fiction had a rich tradition of using sleep and dream phenomena as a technical device, this use always took into consideration real-life beliefs held in the period. The presence of mantic dreams, nocturnal visitations by ghosts, and the quality of sleep and dreams depending upon the sleeper's character and thoughts could hardly resonate with pre- and early modern audiences if they were not familiar with these concepts from their own experience. From the fictional representations of these phenomena, we can even discern what forms these beliefs in individual cultures and periods had and how they gradually shifted (for instance, from dreams as an external entity to those as a subjective experience).

[147] Jonathan Bate, however, resolutely disagrees with the identification of Titania with the real Queen, maintaining that "the consequences of such a reading would be alaraming" (*Shakespeare and Ovid* [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1993] 141). In his opinion, the identification of the Queen with the imperial votaress denies her identification with the Fairy Queen, who is "anything but chaste" (ibid). The episode of Bottom being turned into an ass and spending a night with Titania is, according to Bate's reading, not a "subversive historical allusion" (Bate 142), but an imitation of Ovid's story of the foolish Midas, who was punished with ass's ears (see Bate 140–44).

In spite of the fact that we have presented the history of the use of sleep and dreams in literature as a logical and continuous growth, we cannot expect that individual authors were always aware of the work of their predecessors or that the line of the development, crossing many centuries and cultural environments, was never interrupted. Indeed, in the example of early mediaeval drama, we have demonstrated that the genre enjoyed several fresh starts, when parts of the tradition were forgotten, only to be re-discovered or re-invented again after a certain period of time. Yet it is remarkable how sleeping and dreaming always inclined towards a certain set of technical rôles, regardless of a specific period, culture, or literary form. In the discussion to follow, we will focus on Shakespeare's deployment of these tropes, observing which of these functions they fulfil, both within specific dramatic situations and the overall design of individual plays, and whether some qualitative change is discernible in various phases of Shakespeare's career.

# 2 The Sleeping Character – Characterising the Sleeper

> And rest your gentle head upon her lap,
> And she will sing the song that pleaseth you,
> And on your eyelids crown the god of sleep,
> Charming your blood with pleasing heaviness…
> (*1 Henry IV* 3. 1. 210–13)

## 2. 1 Sleeping and Dreaming as a Key to the Human Mind

Having arrived at the Capulet mansion and on the point of joining the masque held by his family's arch-enemy, Romeo confides his misgivings about the consequences of the upcoming night to his companions, Mercutio and Benvolio, referring to a bad dream which he allegedly had the previous day (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1. 4. 49–50). Before he is given an opportunity to elaborate upon his nocturnal experience, however, the conversation turns into a rather sceptical debate over the credibility of dreams, introducing one of the most poetic speeches in Shakespeare's dramatic canon. It describes Queen Mab, a fairy "no bigger than an agate stone" (l. 56), who visits sleepers at night and, by touching delicate parts of their bodies, stirs dreams in their minds. As a result of her intervention, Mercutio asserts, lovers dream of their loves, courtiers of courtship, ladies of kisses, lawyers of lawsuits, and soldiers of wars (ll. 55–95). When Romeo abruptly stops his friend and adviser's opulent monologue, arguing that he "talk[s] of nothing" (l. 96), Mercutio happily agrees, knowing that his point has been successfully communicated:

> *Mercutio.* True. I talk of dreams,
> Which are the children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
> Which is as thin of substance as the air,
> And more inconstant than the wind[.]
> (1. 4. 96–100)

Although it is Mercutio who wins the dispute, ostentatiously joining the crowd of Shakespearian characters who reject dreams as a source of any special knowledge, the future development of the plot shows what a tragically bad piece of advice he has given to his comrade. When Romeo is faced with two ominous dreams later on in the play – the first being Juliet's waking vision of her new husband "As one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3. 5. 56), the second being his own dream of Juliet finding him dead (5. 1. 6–9) – he is unable to recognise their warnings or appreciate the gravity of ensuing events. In both cases, Romeo's light-hearted interpretations are wrong and, at the play's finale, all the

dreams – including the presumably prophetic one which started the debate between Romeo and Mercutio, but whose actual contents ultimately remain Romeo's secret – are fulfilled with a dreadful irony (for a more detailed discussion of dream prophecies in Shakespeare, see Chapter 3 of the present study). In the light of Romeo's (and, by extension, Juliet's) failure to appreciate the true meaning of dreams, it could be said that there is more prophetic wisdom in Mercutio's mocking remark that "dreamers often lie" (1. 4. 51) than he is willing to concede.

There is, however, another aspect of Mercutio's argument which proves that his words are not just a rhetorical exercise about "nothing", in spite of all his effort to give the impression of the opposite. The more evidence he has accumulated to dismiss the importance of dreams, the clearer it becomes that his monologue draws heavily upon popular Elizabethan dream-lore and that Mercutio is well acquainted with contemporary tenets concerning what we would nowadays call the psychology of dreaming.

Regardless of specific classification, all major humanistic and pre-humanistic oneiric traditions distinguished between two main categories of dreams: 1) *significative* ones, which informed the dreamer, directly or allegorically, of future events, and 2) *non-significative* ones, which offered no prophetic truth and were generally paid little or no attention. The oldest known prototype for this two-fold division can be found in Book XIX of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Penelope, having given an account of her dream of the geese and the eagle, explains that dreams (ὄνειροι) which are "deceitful [ἐλεφαίρομαι], bearing a message that will not be fulfilled", pass through the gate of ivory (ἐλέφας), whereas those which "have truth behind them" and are "to be accomplished [κραίνω] for men who see them" are issued through the gate of polished horn (κέρας).[1] Centuries later, Artemidorus Daldianus, author of the oldest surviving western dream interpretation treatise, *Oneirocritica* (second century AD), and one of the greatest authorities on oneirocriticism for the humanistic world, also mentioned two main types of dream: 1) ὄνειρος, which "indicates a future state of affairs", and 2) ἐνύπνιον, which "indicates a present state of affairs".[2] Unlike Penelope, however, who attributed both kinds of dream to

[1] Homer, *The Odyssey*, 241 = 19. 560–67; cf. Virgil, *Aeneid* I, 6. 893–96: *Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur / cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris, / altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto, / sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes*; and Ausonius, "Ephemeris 8", *Ausonii Opera*, ed. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 8. 22–26: [*D*]*ivinum perhibent vatem sub frondibus ulmi / vana ignavorum simulacra locasse soporum / et geminas numero portas: quae fornice eburno / semper fallaces glomerat super aera formas, / altera quae veros emittit cornea visus.*

[2] Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Robert J. White, 2nd ed. (Torrance, CA: Original Books, 1990) 22 = 1. 1. The first modern edition of the Greek *Oneirocritica* was published by Aldus

divine origin, gods, according to Artemidorus, sent only ὄνειροι, while ἐνύπνια were motivated by the dreamer's daily thoughts, anxieties and bodily distress.[3] Similarly, Macrobius, whose classification of dreams in his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* was enormously popular throughout the Middle Ages, divided his five types of dreams between those "of no assistance in foretelling the future", being caused, among other things, by "mental and physical distress, or anxiety about the future" (*insomnium* and *visum*), and those by means of which "we are gifted with the powers of divination" (*somnium*, *visio* and *oraculum*).[4] Perhaps the most clearly expressed Elizabethan variation upon this classical scheme can be found in *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (1559)[5] by the Elizabethan populariser of science Thomas Hill (b. c. 1528). According to Hill, dreams could be of two kinds: 1) *true* ones, by means of which the dreamer was "defended from the instant euiles & perils, or moued to the attayninge of good things to come & that […] might […] beholde and foreshewe al matters imminent", and 2) *vain* ones, which were "no true signifiers of matters to come but rather shewers of the present affections and desiers of the body".[6] Humanistic authors, unlike their classical predecessors, were usually not very specific about the source of "true" dreams, since any speculations about their nature were always a journey into theologically suspect territory (see Chapter 3. 1 of the present study). Beneath the concept of "vain" ones, on the other hand, lay a fairly stable system concerning the physiology of the human soul and its functioning.

One of the staple doctrines of medical humanism, which largely rested upon such authorities as Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen and Avicenna,[7] was the Aristotelian three-fold division of the human soul into vegetative, sensitive and rational parts or faculties, located

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Manutius's printing house in Venice in 1518. By 1606, when the first edition of Robert Wood's English translation appeared, the work had already been published in Latin (1539, repr. 1546, 1564, 1601 and 1603), Italian (1542, repr. 1547 and 1558), French (1546, repr. 1547, 1555, 1566, 1581, 1595, 1584 and 1600) and German (1597, repr. 1600). By 1690, the English version reached its tenth edition, and twenty-fourth by 1740. The title-pages of the English editions from 1644 onwards also mention a Spanish translation, of which no information is known. Before 1606, English readers were familiar with certain dream interpretations from Artemidorus through Thomas Hill's *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (1559, repr. 1563, 1567, 1571 and 1576), for which *Oneirocritica* was one of the sources.

[3] See Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 22–31 = 1. 1–6.

[4] See Macrobius 87–90 = 1. 3. 2–11.

[5] The oldest surviving fragment (the title-page) is from 1571 (STC [2nd ed.] 13497.5), the oldest surviving complete copy is from 1576 (STC [2nd ed.] 13498). For the publication history of *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, see Francis R. Johnson, "Thomas Hill: An Elizabethan Huxley", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 7 (1944): 329–51 at 342.

[6] Thomas Hill, *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte of the Interpretacion of Dreames* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1576) sig. A2$^{v}$. (Contraction expanded.)

[7] See Karl H. Dannenfeldt, "Sleep: Theory and Practice in the Late Renaissance", *The Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 41 (1986): 415–41.

in the liver, heart and brain respectively,[8] together constituting the life principle of man. Following this trichotomic tendency, the rational soul included three further inner powers: reason (or common sense), memory and imagination (or fantasy), which together formed the human mind. It should be noted here, however, that this basic division was treated differently by different authors. The sixteenth-century French philosopher Pierre Charron (1541–1603), for instance, followed this traditional system, dividing the rational soul into understanding, memory and imagination, and placing its seat in the brain, explicitly disagreeing with those who "haue thought that the reasonable *Soule* was not organicall, that is, had no need of any corporall instrument to exercise it functions".[9] Robert Burton (1577–1640), on the other hand, considered the brain as the seat of the sensible (*i.e.*, sensitive) soul, with common sense, memory and fantasy belonging among its parts, whereas understanding and will, the faculties of the rational soul, performed their operations "without the helpe of any Instruments or Organs".[10] Despite this verbal difference, the common fundamentals from which both systems draw are obvious. For the purpose of this study, and in the context of Mercutio's definition of dreams, the crucial thing is the agreement that the seat of the individual parts of mind was indeed the brain.[11] In this, Burton went even further than some of his predecessors and contemporaries, specifically assigning common sense, fantasy and memory separate rooms from the front to the back of the head.[12]

The functions of the soul and its faculties were, according to humanistic beliefs, performed through the so-called *spirits of life*, which were dispersed in bodily humours and circulated throughout the body. Thomas Elyot (c. 1490–1546), author of one of the most popular sixteenth-century dietaries *Castel of Helthe* (1539) and, beside other works, the first comprehensive dictionary of Latin written in English (1538), defined a spirit of life as "an ayry substance subtyll, styryng the powers of the body to perfourme their

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[8] Galen, *Galeni Liber, quod Animi Mores Corporis Temperamenta Sequantur*, in *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, Vol. 4, ed. Karl Gottlob Kühn (Leipzig: Karl Knobloch, 1822) 772: *Tres igitur animae species esse, Platonis etiam sententia alias demonstravimus; insuper hanc in jecinore, illam in corde, tertiam in cerebro sedem occupare.*

[9] Pierre Charron, *Of Wisedome Three Books*, trans. Samson Lennard (London: Edward Blount and William Aspley, 1608) 46–47. (Original italics.)

[10] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Vol. 1, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner and Nicholas K. Kiessling (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989) 158 = 1. 1. 2. 10.

[11] Cf. Edmund Spenser's "House of Alma", in which the higher, "immortall, perfect, masculine" part of soul is attributed to the head, whereas the lower, "imperfect, mortall, foeminine" part belongs to the body (Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene, Book Two*, ed. Erik Gray [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2006] 144 = 2. 9. 22). For a detailed discussion of this passage, see P. Ansell Robin, "Spenser's 'House of Alma'", *The Modern Language Review* 6 (1911): 169–73; Vincent Foster Hopper "Spenser's 'House of Temperance'", *PMLA* 55 (1940): 958–67; or Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) 260–88.

[12] See Burton I, 152 = 1. 1. 2. 7.

operations".[13] They were believed to be of three kinds: 1) natural, originating in the liver and controlling digestion, 2) vital, proceeding from the heart, distributing heat to the entire body, and 3) animal, originating in the brain, governing all the senses.[14] During their daytime activity, the spirits tended to tire and dissipate, so after a certain period of time they withdrew inwardly from external organs to replenish themselves during sleep. This idea is referred to on several occasions in Shakespeare, for instance in *Hamlet*, when the actor playing the King in the play "The Murder of Gonzago" lies down to sleep, only to be subsequently killed by his adversary, saying

> [*Player King.*] […] Sweet, leave me here a while;
> My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
> The tedious day with sleep.
> (3. 2. 205–7)

or in *The Tempest*, when Sebastian remarks, "I find not / Myself disposed to sleep", upon which Antonio replies, "Nor I; my spirits are nimble" (2. 1. 197f).

The fundamental aspect of humanistic dream theories was the belief that, during sleep, certain parts of the rational soul ceased to function completely, most notably reason, the "Judge or Moderator of the rest",[15] enabling imagination's activity to become dominant. Burton noted that "[i]n men [fantasy] is subject and governed by *Reason*, or at least should be". However, "[i]n time of sleepe," he continued, "this faculty is free, & many times conceaves strange, stupend, absurd shapes".[16] When describing the potential power of imagination, Pierre Charron used terms similar to Burton's, stressing that it is "vncertaine, inconstant, fleeting, deceitfull, a very ill and dangerous guide, which makes head against reason".[17]

The strongest impulse for the conception of non-significative dreams was the nocturnal activity of the spirits of life, which could now freely communicate remaining daily sensations and bodily passions to the unprotected imagination. References to this concept in Elizabethan literature are plentiful. Christopher Langton (1521–1578), for instance, in his popular medical handbook, asserted that "[a] dreame is nothynge, but an ymagination made in the sleape, whan that dyuers spirites meete togyther in the brayne, whyche beyng the instrument of our thoughtes, do make dyuers ymages";[18] Thomas

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[13] Thomas Elyot, *The Castel of Helth* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1539) sig. B2v.

[14] See Christopher Langton, *An Introduction into Phisycke wyth an Vniuersal Dyet* (London: Edwarde Whytchurche, 1545) fols. xlviir–xlixr; Elyot sig. B2v; or Burton I, 141 = 1. 1. 2. 2.

[15] Burton I, 152 = 1. 1. 2. 7.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Charron 67.

[18] Langton fol. lxxxviir.

Wright (d. 1624), in his discussion of human passions, likewise saw the source of bodily dreams in the nocturnal movement of the spirits acting upon the imaginative faculty of the soul, claiming that "these dreams are caused by the spirits which ascend into the imagination, the which being purer or groser, hotter or colder more or lesse, […] move diuerse passions according to their nature";[19] and finally Reginald Scot (c. 1538–1599), in his treatise of witchcraft, stated that

> physicall dreames are naturall, and the cause of them dwelleth in the nature of man. For they are the inward actions of the mind in the spirits of the brain, whilest the bodie is occupied with sleep: for as touching the mind it self, it never sleepeth.[20]

In the light of the body of Elizabethan popular medical and dream-lore as outlined above, Mercutio's claim that dreams are "the children of an idle brain, / Begot of nothing but vain fantasy, / Which is as thin of substance as the air, / And more inconstant than the wind" is not just a banal observation: one can clearly recognise in it contemporary views – most probably shared by Shakespere's original audiences – concerning the origin of dreams, expressed in terms very close to those which authors of popular and learned works on the topic frequently used. Renaissance medical concepts also give somewhat clearer contours to the mysterious Queen Mab,[21] who is, as the begetter of dreams, Shakespeare's own invention and whose exercises resemble the influence of the spirits of life upon the sleeping mind, as described by the authorities of the time.

Mercutio's monologue, however, reveals yet another important part of the humanistic dream tradition, which might perhaps seem obvious and rather trivial to a modern audience, but which was frequently a subject of discussions in early modern medical literature and in various forms pervades Shakespeare's entire dramatic canon – that is, the correlation between the quality of dreams and the quality of dreamers.

There were two ways in which dreams could betray the dreamers' characters: 1) through the sleeping person's daily thoughts and passions, and 2) through his or her complexion. The first concept has already been touched upon when we mentioned that, with the faculty of reason being inactive, the spirits of life freely communicated passions and daily sensations to imagination. Imagination itself, according to Burton, "keepes [perceptions of things present or absent] longer, recalling them to minde againe, or making

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[19] Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde* (London: V[alentine] S[immes] for W[alter] B[urre], 1601) 111.

[20] Reginald Scot, *The Discouerie of Witchcraft* (London: William Brome, 1584) 178.

[21] For various theories about the possible models for Shakespeare's Queen Mab, see W. P. Reeves, "Shakespeare's Queen Mab", *Modern Language Notes* 17 (1902): 10–14.

new of his owne", which was an activity beyond man's control during sleep.[22] Even without this sophisticated explanation, the idea that dreams reflect people's daily thoughts and desires had been commonplace in oneiric literature since the classical period. Artemidorus asserted that "dreams that are similar to the dreamer's thoughts are non-significative and in the *enhypnion* class", [23] having previously stated that "it is natural for a lover to seem to be with his beloved in a dream and for a frightened man to see what he fears".[24] Macrobius elaborated upon the same idea when describing the class of dreams which he called the *insomnium*, giving an example of "the lover who dreams of possessing his sweetheart or of losing her [*amator deliciis suis aut fruentem se uideat aut carentem*], or the man who fears the plots or might of an enemy and is confronted with him in his dream or seems to be fleeing him".[25] Finally Hippocrates (c. 460–c. 370 BC), in the last book of his work on *Regimen*, gave his medical opinion of dreams reflecting daily preoccupations, asserting that

> those [dreams] that merely consist of a transference to the night of a person's daytime actions and thoughts, which continue to happen in normal fashion just as they were done and thought during the day, are good for they indicate a healthy state.[26]

Early modern authors were consistent with their ancient predecessors, adding little to this part of dream-lore. Langton, for instance, said about natural dreams that "we fansie suche thynges in the nyght as we thought on, whan we were wakynge, whervpon Claudian the poet sayeth,[27] iudges dreame of stryfe, and controuersies of the lawe, & carters dreame of theyr cartes";[28] David Person argued that "the avaricious dreameth of gold, the lover of his Mistris, the Iealous of his corrivall, *&c.*", adding that "if not ever, yet for the most part, this

[22] Burton I, 152 = 1. 1. 2. 7.
[23] Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 31 = 1. 6. (Original italics.)
[24] Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 22 = 1. 1.
[25] Macrobius 88 = 1. 3. 4.
[26] Hippocrates, "Dreams", *Hippocratic Writings*, ed. G. E. R. Lloyd, trans. J. Chadwick and W. N. Mann (London: Penguin Books, 1983) 252–53 = *Regimen IV*, 88. The entire Hippocratic Corpus, including the treatise on dreams, was first printed in Latin 1525, the first printed Greek edition followed a year later. The first partial English translation of Hippocratic writings was included in Peter Lowe's *The Whole Art of Chirurgie* (1597); the complete English and French translations, however, came as late as the nineteenth century.
[27] Claudian, Praefatio to "Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti", in *Claudian*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1922) ll. 1–10: *Omnia, quae sensu volvuntur vota diurno, / pectore sopito reddit amica quies. / venator defessa toro cum membra reponit, / mens tamen ad silvas et sua lustra redit. / iudicibus lites, aurigae somnia currus / vanaque nocturnis meta cavetur equis. / furto gaudet amans, permutat navita merces / et vigil elapsas quaerit avarus opes, / blandaque largitur frustra sitientibus aegris / inriguus gelido pocula fonte sopor.*
[28] Langton fol. lxxxvii[v].

happeneth true or at least in part",[29] whereas the French physician André du Laurens (1558–1609) claimed that "[t]he fisherman (sayth *Theocritus*[30]) dreameth commonly of fishes, riuers and nets: the souldier of alarums, taking of townes, and the sounding of trumpets: the amorous raue of nothing in the night, but their loues obiect".[31] As we can see, Mercutio's Queen Mab speech is, in this respect, not only consistent with scientific writings of the time, but also strongly resembles their assertions in terms of its form.

The second kind of information which natural dreams were widely believed to be able to give the observer about the dreamers was the disposition of their body and, more importantly, their mind. According to the humanistic humoral medicine (drawing from Hippocratic and Galenic tradition), the predominant of the four basic substances of the human body (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) significantly influenced a person's character. Burton argued that people with blood in excess were "much inclined to laughter, wittie & merry, conceipted in discourse, pleasant, if they bee not farre gone, much giuen to musicke, dancing, and to be in womens company"; those with the dominant phlegm were, on the other hand, "dull, slow, cold, blockish, asse-like, […] much given to weeping, and delight in waters, ponds, pooles, rivers, fishing, fowling, &c."; persons of a temperament ruled by yellow bile were "bold and impudent, and of a more hairebraine disposition, apt to quarrell, and think of such things, battels, combats, of their manhood, furious, impatient in discourse, stiffe, irrefragable and prodigious in their tenets, and if they be moved, most violent, outragious, and ready to disgrace, provoke any, to kill themselues and others"; whereas a melancholic person was usually "sad, timorous, and fearefull, […] more stupid then ordinary, cold, heavy, dull, solitary, sluggish".[32] As they were able to expose the dreamer's thoughts, natural dreams could, in a similar manner, also indicate the dominant humour which inspired them, leading to lists or catalogues of types of dreamers and their dreams resembling those mentioned above. David Person mentioned that

> [n]aturall [dreams] are caused either by the Predominant matter, humor or affections in us: As the Cholericke, who dreameth of fire, debates, skirmishes and the like; The Sanguine, of love-sports and all joviall things; The Melancholicke on death dangers, solitudes, *&c.* where the flegmaticke dreameth of Waters, Seas, drowning and the rest.[33]

[29] David Person, *Varieties: or, A Surveigh of Rare and Excellent Matters Necessary and Delectable for All Sorts of Persons* (London: Richard Badger, 1635) 252. (Original italics.)

[30] A reference to Idyll XXI (Αλιεῖς – "The Fisherman" or "A Fisherman's Dream"). (Original italics.)

[31] André du Laurens, *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight* (London: Felix Kingston, 1599) 100.

[32] Burton I, 397–400 = 1. 3. 1. 3.

[33] Person 251–52. (Original italics.)

Similarly, du Laurens noted that "he that is cholerike, dreameth of nothing but fires, fightings and burnings: the phlegmatike thinketh himselfe always be in water",[34] and Wright observed that "wee prooue in dreams, and physitians prognosticate by them what humour aboundeth, for choler causeth fighting, blood, and wounds, melancholy disgrace feares, affrightments, ill successe, and such like".[35]

Since, by Shakespeare's time, lists of dreams characteristic of certain dreamers had become an established topos,[36] the dramatist – when shaping Mercutio's Queen Mab speech –was just as likely to find inspiration in one of the "dream catalogues" of older works of literature as in contemporary medical handbooks. The important fact, nevertheless, is that common notions of both literary and learned traditions constituted part of the early modern intellectual context in which Shakespeare's works were written and performed before their original audiences. Moreover, occasional references to literary works in medical treatises, as shown above, indicate that, in the early modern period, the boundaries between literary and learned discourses were less strict and clear than the modern reader might expect and that the two influenced each other.

Most of these observations concerning the treatment of dreams in the early modern era are also applicable to Renaissance concepts of sleep, which, similarly, were a subject of a high interest and which, likewise, found their way into Shakespeare's dramatic works. When Macbeth kills King Duncan and hallucinates a voice crying that "Macbeth shall sleep no more" (*Macbeth* 2. 2. 41), he pathetically pronounces a most exquisite, and most accurate, definition of sleep:

> [*Macbeth.*] […] the innocent sleep,
> Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleave of care,
> The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
> Chief nourisher in life's feast –
> (2. 2. 34–38)

The obvious literary source for Macbeth's invocation to sleep and its beneficiary powers can be identified in Book XI of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (43 BC–AD 17), in which Iris addresses Somnus, calling him "all things' rest [*quies rerum*]" and "gentlest of the gods [*placidissime deorum*], the spirit's peace, care flies from [*pax animi, quem cura fugit*]: who soothes the body wearied with toil, and readies it for fresh labours [*qui corpora duris fessa*

[34] Laurentius 99.
[35] Wright 111.
[36] In his discussion of the possible sources of Mercutio's speech, Robert K. Presson mentions works by Lucretius, Petronius, Claudian, Jean de Meung, Giovanni Boccaccio and Geoffrey Chaucer. See Presson.

*ministeriis mulces reparasque labori*]”,[37] her words in many aspects prefiguring Shakespeare’s.[38] It would be false to assume, however, that Macbeth’s desperate lament is just a self-serving literary convention, in spite of the fact that we could find almost identical formulae praising sleep scattered throughout works of a number of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, both prominent and obscure.[39] At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Macbeth’s lines would touch a subject which was, just like dreams, widely contemplated in early modern English society and regarded as one of a great significance.

Following classical tradition once again, humanistic medicine considered sleep as one of the six non-natural things (*res non naturales*), *i.e.*, six non-innate conditions crucial for the maintenance of life and health (air, movement and rest, food and drink, sleep and vigil, inanition and repletion, and affections of the mind), which constituted the regimen prescribed by contemporary physicians and authors of popular medical handbooks. When describing the importance of non-naturals, Robert Burton stressed that “[n]othing better then moderate Sleep, nothing worse then it, if it be in extreames, or unreasonably used”.[40] Aware of this fact, humanistic authors on sleep felt the strong need to advise their readers as to what the “reasonable use” of sleep was, often going into such details as the recommended length and time of sleep, what should or should not be eaten before going to bed, what positions should be adopted and how they should change in the course of the night, how big the bed should be, what the ideal temperature of the bedroom is or what material the blanket should be made of.[41] Literature on the subject was plentiful and, as Karl H. Dannenfeldt notes, in sixteenth-century England, the general reading audience had an array of both domestic and – through numerous translations – international opinion on the theory and practice of sleep.[42]

What made sleep the most precious “[b]alm of hurt minds” and “spirit’s peace, care flies from”, was, however, less its beneficial power for the body than its comforting effect on mental health. Ambroise Paré (c. 1520–1590) stressed this explicitly when saying that “[n]either doth sleepe only give ease to the wearyed members, but also lessens our cares

[37] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. S. Kline (Ann Arbor: Borders Classics, 2004) 11. 623–25.

[38] Indeed, Bate considers Shakespearian dramatic soliloquies as heirs to Ovidian dramatic monologues, both of which are able to create “the illusion that a fictional being has an interior life” (Bate 5). Although Macbeth’s speech is not, strictly speaking, a soliloquy, as we shall see later on in this discussion, it plays a crucial rôle in delineating the character and his moral image.

[39] See Albert S. Cook, “The Elizabethan Invocations to Sleep”, *Modern Language Notes* 4 (1889): 229–31.

[40] Burton I, 245 = 1. 2. 2. 7.

[41] See Dannenfeldt, esp. 422–31.

[42] Dannenfeldt 420.

and makes us to forget our labours";[43] Thomas Cogan (c. 1545–1607), likewise, noted that, apart from refreshing body, sleep also "reuiueth the minde, it pacifieth anger, it driueth away sorrowe, and finally, if it be moderate, it bringeth the whole man to good state and temperature".[44] William Vaughan (1577–1641) was of the same opinion, explaining to his readers that moderate sleep "taketh away sorrow, and asswageth furie of the minde".[45] In the first lines of Sonnet 39 of *Astrophil and Stella* (1580s), Philip Sidney elaborates on the same idea:

> Come sleepe, ô sleepe, the certain knot of peace,
> The baiting place of wit, the balme of woe,
> The poore man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
> Th'indifferent Judge between the high and low[.]
> (ll. 1–4)[46]

We can see that Macbeth's lines almost echo Sidney's. There is, however, one important aspect of sleep which Shakespeare, as shall be discussed later, takes for granted and works with on the dramatic level without feeling the need to name it, whereas Sidney addresses it directly – that is, the concept of sleep being the "judge" of people. Indeed, for Macbeth and his wife, the loss of sleep is an excruciating punishment for their crimes, while the sleep which they kill, that is, Duncan's, is called "innocent". The quality of sleep therefore directly reflects the quality of the sleeper. In *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), Shakespeare's younger contemporary Thomas Dekker (c. 1572–1632) mentioned the same concept when explaining that "[b]eggars in their beds take as much pleasure as kings", but "if a tyrant would give his crown for an hour's slumber, it cannot be bought".[47] While a pure character is rewarded with the beneficial power of a peaceful night's rest, the same benefits are naturally denied a wicked one.

The deep interest in early modern England in sleep and the physiological processes occurring during it formed a solid basis for dramatic uses of these phenomena. Due to the strong beliefs concerning sleep and dreams in the early modern period, Shakespeare's original audiences were most probably very sensitive to fictional references to them, these motifs automatically evoking for them certain values and expectations. The dramatist was thus given an easy and very powerful device for delineating his characters, being able to

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[43] Ambroise Paré, *The Workes of that Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey*, trans. Th[omas] Johnson (London: Th[omas] Cotes and R. Young, 1634) 35.

[44] Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (London: Henry Midleton for William Norton, 1584) 237.

[45] William Vaughan, *Approved Directions for Health* (London: T. S[nodham] for Roger Jackson, 1612) 58.

[46] Philip Sidney, *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962).

[47] Thomas Decker, *The Gull's Hornbook*, ed. John Nott (Bristol: J. M. Gutch, 1812) 60, 61.

expose their temperament and inner thoughts, as well as their moral qualities. As will be demonstrated, the force of the dramatic image of sleep and dream often transcends the character as an individual and contributes to the design of a scene or an entire play. The discussion to follow will describe the specific deployments of the motifs of sleeping and dreaming, examining their functions and significance for concrete situations and attempting to determine their characteristic features and development throughout Shakespeare's dramatic career.

## 2. 2 The Anatomy of a Sleeping Figure

When, at the beginning of the last scene of *Othello*, the eponymous protagonist, with a lamp in his hand, approaches the bed in his very own bedroom and draws back its curtain, he stays petrified for a moment and the dramatic action of the play temporarily ceases as well. He had expected – even desired – to find what he has just found, yet the view fills him with almost sacred awe and makes him once more question the intention with which he came. The flow of dramatic time has, as it were, stopped, and the audience are left to observe how Othello, having exchanged rage for scopophilic lust, very typical of the period (see below), observes his wife:

> *Othello.* It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.
> Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars.
> It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,
> Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
> And smooth as monumental alabaster.
> Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
> Put out the light, and then put out the light.
> If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
> I can again thy former light restore
> Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
> Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
> I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd thy rose
> I cannot give it vital growth again.
> It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.
> [*He kisses her*]
> O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
> Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
> Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee
> And love thee after. One more, and this the last.
> *He kisses her*
> So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
> But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly,
> It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.
> (5. 2. 1–22)

The phrase "to observe how Othello observes" is a key one here, since, although the focus point of Othello's words is Desdemona, her rôle within the situation is merely structural. Her radiant beauty praised by Othello is, realistically taken, no more real than the starry night on which the scene takes place ("Desdemona" was in fact a boy in costume, who would be in a large theatre hardly visible for the majority of the audience anyway, while the "night" was induced by the presence of lamps, torches or candles, since performances in public theatres took place in early afternoon) and all we can "see" is in fact a purely verbal, not visual, image delivered by Othello's soliloquy. On the other hand, the way in which Othello describes what *he* sees gives us just enough information to create an entirely different image: that of his momentary mental disposition. The proverbial "innocent sleep" thus in this case does not judge the sleeper, whose purity has already been proven by the previous dramatic narrative, but the observer, whose deeds are yet to be determined.

The inner dilemma which Othello has to resolve within the limited space of twenty-two lines of his soliloquy (and Desdemona's sleep) is no less grave than the dilemma pervading the entire plot of the play: the way from "Yet I'll not shed her blood" to "Yet she must die" is just as arduous as the way from the affectionate "Excellent wretch" (3. 3. 91) to the hateful "lewd minx" (3. 3. 478), as he calls Desdemona at various stages of the "temptation scene", the longest scene of the play. The beginning of the bedroom scene, therefore, becomes a means of re-enacting the whole conflict of the play before it can finally be resolved. Paradoxically, however, although this crucial moment requires Othello to marshal his sensible faculties, in terms of humanistic tenets, he seems to be no more awake than his sleeping wife. At the beginning of his speech, Othello addresses his soul, which was – as we have just demonstrated – commonly believed to be the seat of reason. He assumes that this (in Burton's words) "Judge or Moderator" will help him to pass a righteous judgement in the "cause" of his wife. As we have, however, also showed, soul was considered as the place of imagination as well, which, when unrestricted, could produce "strange, stupend, absurd shapes", without the person's knowledge.

From Othello's words, it seems, indeed, that the ability of his reason to govern the lower faculties of the soul (that is, his imagination) is suppressed and his irrational passions are given free rein. Reality and illusion have blended in his mind in a similar fashion as in a dream state. He is no longer able to distinguish between the crime which he is about to commit, and justice, whose name he invokes; between hatred, with which Iago has infected him, and love, which he still claims to feel; between the whore, whose image his distorted mind has falsely created, and the faithful wife, whom his eyes can see; and,

perhaps most importantly, between the violent barbarian he has become, and the competent soldier, honest person and loving husband he used to be. Rather than concise thinking, Othello's soliloquy resembles a jumpy and chaotic mixture of impressions – visual ("whiter skin of her than snow"), olfactory ("O balmy breath"), and tactual and gustatory ("So sweet [a kiss]").

Although, superficially, a development is discernible in his argument, Othello in fact does not wish any real development or resolution, either of his reasoning, or the situation in progress. With his "One more, one more" and "One more, and this the last", he clearly expresses a desire to preserve the status quo for as long as possible, arresting the scene's action and infinitely postponing the inevitable. As a result, the audience cannot be sure whether the fictional situation on the stage fills just a few seconds of realistic time or an hour.[48] The final verdict over Othello is thus postponed until he loses his control over the time and action, and the spectators are made to bear almost unbearable dramatic suspense, generated by the image of a murderer standing, as if forever, over the bed with his sleeping potential victim. When Othello finally announces that "She wakes" and is forced to make the decision, it immediately becomes clear that Desdemona's awaking is not accompanied by his. The suspense is relieved by a long-protracted crime, followed by an immediate punishment.

To centre the climactic scene of the play on a sleeping figure was not an incidental decision, but the playwright's deliberate, and delicate, work with the already existing repertoire of motifs of theatre of the time. Sleeping was not only, as we have demonstrated, of high cultural importance for an early modern audience, but by Shakespeare's age, the image of a sleeper had also became a theatrical commonplace with a long literary tradition and established dramatic significance.

The beginnings of the topos can be traced back to Old-Testament and classical stories, intimately known to the early modern world. In the first Book of Samuel, we find an incident in which David approaches King Saul sleeping in his tent with "his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster" (1 Sam 26: 7). Although his companions urge David to kill the King, David refuses and only takes the Saul's spear and water jug as proof that he was there and could have slain him if he had wanted to (cf. Giacomo taking Innogen's necklace

[48] As Emrys Jones points out, the connection between the playing time and the realistic one is in Shakespearian drama very loose and, with a few exceptions, the real duration of individual scenes or situations cannot be simply calculated. See Emrys Jones, "Time and Continuity", in *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1971) 41–65.

as false proof of their affair; see below). Ovid's *Metamorphoses*[49] gives a vivid account of Myrrha's dilemma when approaching her father Cinyras's bed, driven by her incestuous love: "The closer she is to her sin, the more she shudders at it, repents of her audacity, and wants to be able to turn back, unrecognised [*Quoque suo proprior sceleri est, magis horret, et ausi paenitet, et vellet non cognita posse reverti*]".[50] Ultimately, Myrrha does succumb to her passion and when Cinyras decides to fetch a light to know who his lover is, he sees "his daughter and his guilt" (cf. Othello's words "it is the cause, my soul", identifying the sleeping Desdemona with her crime),[51] leaving him "speechless from grief" (*vidit et scelus et natam verbisque dolore retentis*).[52] Only her prompt escape saves Myrrha from being killed with her father's sword. In Book V of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius (c. 125–c. 180 AD), Psyche, convinced that her mysterious husband is a monster intending to kill her, approaches his bed with a lamp and a razor in her hands. When she, however, sees the sleeping Cupid, "the gentlest and sweetest beast of all [*omnium ferarum mitissimam dulcissimamque bestiam*]", she is "terrified at this marvellous sight and put out of her mind [*At vero Psyche tanto aspectu deterrita et impos animi*]". She closely examines Cupid's "glorious hair drenched with ambrosia; […] his milk neck and rosy cheeks [… covered with] neatly shackled ringlets of his locks, some prettily hanging in front, others behind; the lightning of their great brilliance made even the lamp's light flicker" and then beholds the rest of his "hairless and resplendent" body (cf. Othello's detailed description of Desdemona).[53] Falling in love with Cupid (*in Amoris incidit amorem*), Psyche "lean[s] over him, panting desperately for him. She eagerly cover[s] him with impassioned and impetuous kisses [*prona in eum efflictim inhians patulis ac petulantibus saviis festinanter ingestis*]" (cf. Othello leaning over Desdemona and kissing her at the end of his soliloquy),[54] only to wake her initially intended victim and lose him forever.[55] Perhaps the most famous allusion to the episode in English literature is the story of Pyrocles and

[49] Ovid was by far Shakespeare's favourite classical author, with about 90 per cent of all references to classical mythology in his dramatic canon drawn from this author (Bate 23). Educated early modern English playgoers were significantly more versed in classical works than modern audiences are, and many of them would immediately recognize allusions to Latin stories. For Renaissance audiences, Bate argues, reading (and, by extension, watching a performance) meant "reading with a consciousness of the classics" (Bate 13).

[50] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10. 460–61.

[51] In legal terminology, the word "cause" could mean both a matter before a court or the charge (*i.e.*, guilt) itself. In Othello's case, both meanings are applicable and Shakespeare seems to be ambiguous here on purpose. See "cause, *n.*", *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

[52] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10. 473–74.

[53] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, Vol. 1, ed. and trans. J. Arthur Hanson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) 5. 22.

[54] Apuleius I, 5. 23.

[55] On the parallels between Apuleius's account and the bedroom scene in *Othello*, see Robert H. F. Carver, *The Protean Ass: The "Metamorphoses" of Apuleius from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007) 432–33.

Philoclea, who are, at the beginning of Book IV of Sidney's *Arcadia*, caught sleeping in bed by Dametas, "looking with the lamp in his hand, but neither with such a face nor mind, upon these excellent creatures, as Psyche did upon her unknown lover".[56] Without waking the couple, Dametas takes Pyrocles's sword and leaves the room with the intention to report to Duke Basilius what he has found.

Early modern English dramatists seem to especially enjoy the motif of a sleeper under threat, if we can judge from the frequent use of the dramatic situation in Jacobean plays. The 1607 play *The Devil's Charter*, written by Barnabe Barnes (c. 1571–1609) and performed by the King's Men at court in the same year, contains an episode in which the vicious Pope Alexander VI drugs the Italian Prince Astor (who is also his lover) and his brother Philippo and, when they both fall asleep, approaches the bed of the "Poore harmless boyes strangers to sinne and euill" (4. 5. 2514)[57] and murders them with two asps in order to get Astor's lands. In *The Maid's Tragedy* (1608–1611) by Francis Beaumont (1584–1616) and John Fletcher (1579–1625), the King's mistress Evadne avenges the shame caused to her by her royal lover. When she approaches the King's bed, she wonders how he can sleep so soundly and asks God "Why give you peace to this untemperate beast / That hath so long transgressed you?" (5. 1. 25f).[58] Then Evadne decides that she "must not / Thus tamely do it [*i.e.*, to kill him] as he sleeps" (ll. 28f), but rather that "[her] vengeance / Shall take him waking, and then lay before him / The number of his wrongs and punishments" (ll. 31–33). Ultimately, she ties the King to his bed, awakes him and stabs him to death, despite his begging for mercy. In the rather obscure play *The Valiant Welshman* (before 1615), sometimes attributed to the King's Men's actor Robert Armin (c. 1563–1615), the King of Britain's brother Gald, with the help of Bluso the Magician, hides invisible in the bedroom of his wife Voada, who was abducted by the Roman Marcus Gallicus, and watches how Marcus, with a candle and a sword in his hands, "like bloudy Tarquin" (5. 1. 14) lustfully approaches Voada's bed:

> [*Mar.*] Behold the locall residence of loue,
> Euen in the Rosie tincture of her cheeke.
> I am all fire, and must needs be quencht,
> Or the whole house of nature will be burt.
> Fayre *Voada*, awake: tis I, awake.
> (5. 1. 38–42)[59]

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[56] Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 237.
[57] Barnabe Burnes, *The Devil's Charter*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (Louvain: A. Uystpruyst, 1904).
[58] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T. W. Craik (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988).
[59] *The Valiant Welshman*, ed. Valentin Kreb (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1902).

Before Marcus Gallicus, however, manages to touch Voada, Gald and Bluso burst forward, tumble Marcus over the bed and take Voada off stage. Finally, in the Beaumont and Fletcher apocrypha *The Faithful Friends* (1604–1626), the Roman general Marcus Tullius, having been falsely persuaded that, in his absence, his best friend Armanus served as a pander in Tullius's wife Philadelpha's affair with King Titus Martius, finds Armanus asleep, remarking that "he is so vsed to sin / nott the black furies that still houle about him / nor his own guilt that euer calling him / can waken him" (4. 1. 2311–14).[60] Although he seems to be resolute to take revenge at first, Tullius finds himself ultimately overcome with very Othellian doubts:

> [*Tull.*] my hand shakes
> Reuenge and furie gard mee round about
> and force calme pittie and compassion back
> once more haue at thee, still my arme wants strength
> and cannot hold my weapon[.]
> (4. 1. 2318–2322)

Unlike Desdemona, however, when Armanus awakes, he assures Tullius of his innocence and Philadelpha's faithfulness and the friends are reconciled. All these examples employ the same literary commonplace, which fulfils a similar dramatic purpose and produces a very similar atmosphere of the situations in question. A particularly interesting fact about the mentioned plays is that all of them are connected with Shakespeare's theatrical company.

David Bevington has, however, observed that the theatrical tradition of representing the topos of a sleeping figure dates back centuries before the Renaissance, as far as the mediaeval liturgical drama. Since the twelfth century, the episode of sleeping magi, being warned by an angel to return from Bethlehem to their country by another way, had been a recurrent motif in church nativity plays. The image, Bevington asserts, was meant to demonstrate human frailty and divine presence, its staging in church right among the spectators being "a gesture of spiritual significance",[61] indicating that the dramatic representation of sleep was already in the Middle Ages a powerful means of appealing to the audience. In subsequent years, the motif established itself in the theatrical tradition and its thematic significance widened. With regard to several Continental dramatic works of the period, Bevington identifies an early form of portraying the character's psychology and

[60] *The Faithful Friends*, ed. G. M. Pinciss (Oxford: The Malone Society, 1975).
[61] Bevington 55.

inner struggle, as well as the defenceless sleeper's potential victimisation,[62] as the key dramatic functions of sleep on the mediaeval stage.

Although the convention of sleep as a dramaturgic device was still used in the early modern period, both its formal and thematic aspects in most of the works of the time had changed so radically as to "challenge any previous idea of continuity and tradition".[63] As Bevington continues to illustrate with regard to the work of John Lyly, the chief English pre-Shakespearian dramatist to use sleep and dream motifs, the main interest of humanistic playwrights employing this device lay rather in "the magic of theater" than in "providential concern with human destiny".[64] Yet, in Shakespeare's plays, we may find strong ties with the mediaeval tradition. As we shall see, Shakespeare's typical sleeper is often a physically weak character unable to defend himself or herself, be it a woman, a prisoner, or an ailing king. The motif of sleep, therefore, still betokens a dangerous vulnerability of the innocence which is about to be victimised. Sleep also, as we shall see later on, often serves as a place where the divine and the profane worlds meet. Although the mediaeval angels and saints are, as the representatives of the spiritual world, replaced by ghosts, the topos of the sleeping character's piety remains foregrounded as a portrayal of their inner qualities or struggle.

David Roberts asserts that, in the era of Humanism, the image of a character sleeping on the stage gained another, almost sensational dimension which the mediaeval tradition lacked, or rather contained in a different form:

> The seventeenth century, it is now widely reported, was the scopophilic century, the century in love with looking at and into things, when in our case playwrights and their audiences shared an acute sense not just of the meaning of visual symbols but of the significance of what could not and should not be seen on stage, whether God, reigning monarchs, or women.[65]

A sleeper, Roberts argues, especially a defenceless sleeping woman, posed for an Elizabethan audience an irresistible attraction, an opportunity to engage in the dramatic situation and share for a moment the violator's perspective, "even as it [*i.e.*, the audience] dreads the outcome".[66] With this aspect of early modern drama, the importance of the fictional observers necessarily rose as well, since it was his view that the audience shared.

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[62] Of all plays mentioned by Bevington, an example closest to Shakespeare's later employment of the motif would be the late twelfth century play *Tres Clerici*, describing the story of three scholars who are murdered in sleep by their hosts (one of whom hesitates to commit the crime), whose deed is ultimately punished by Saint Nicholas.

[63] Bevington 60.

[64] Bevington 61.

[65] David Roberts, "Sleeping Beauties: Shakespeare, Sleep and the Stage", *The Cambridge Quarterly* 35 (2006): 231–54 at 236.

[66] Roberts 249.

Such an emotional involvement from the theatregoer's side had a similar function to the sacred awe with which the mediaeval spectator watched sleeping scenes in the church or the suspense which the reader of the literary models mentioned above felt when reading the stories. The early modern theatre, however, went one step further: with such immediate experience of the audience and their consequent high sensitivity to certain scenic dramaturgy, the border between the stage and the auditorium narrowed and a space opened for a playwright to communicate easily all subtle elements of the dramatic situation's design. If we return to the scene from *Othello* described at the beginning of the present section, all the verbal details of Desdemona's appearance materialise in the observers' minds and Othello's anger, love and desire to arrest time become for a moment their very own. The tension of the scene, therefore, does not only arise from its conventional iconography, but also from the audience's urge to participate emotionally in its practical execution.

A formally very similar situation, clearly modelled with that of *Othello* in mind, appears in Act 2, Scene 2 of Shakespeare's later romance *Cymbeline*. In this case, however, the function of the motif is somewhat different. The scene again takes place in the middle of the night, showing sleeping Innogen and the villainous Giacomo, hidden in her bedroom attempting to secure false evidence which would incriminate her in the eyes of her husband Posthumus, leading him to demand her death:

*Giacomo.* The crickets sing, and man's o'er-laboured sense
Repairs itself by rest. Our Tarquin thus
Did softly press the rushes, ere he wakened
The chastity he wounded. Cytherea,
How bravely thou becom'st thy bed! Fresh lily,
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch,
But kiss, one kiss! Rubies unparagoned,
How dearly they do't! 'Tis her breathing that
Perfumes the chamber thus. The flame o'th'taper
Bows toward her, and would underpeep her lids,
To see th'enclosèd lights, now canopied
Under these windows, white and azure-laced
With blue of heaven's own tinct. But my design –
To note the chamber. I will write all down.
[*He writes in his tables*]
Such and such pictures, there the window, such
Th'adornment of her bed, the arras, figures,
Why, such and such; and the contents o'th' story.
Ah, but some natural notes about her body,
Above ten thousand meaner moveables
Would testify, t'enrich mine inventory.
O sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her!
And be her sense but as a monument,
Thus in a chapel lying! Come off, come off;

As slippery as the Gordian knot was hard!
[*Taking off her bracelet*]
'Tis mine, and this will witness outwardly,
As strongly as the conscience does within,
To the madding of her lord. On her left breast
A mole, cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops
I'th' bottom of a cowslip. Here's a voucher,
Stronger than ever law could make. This secret
Will force him think I have pick'd the lock and ta'en
The treasure of her honour. No more. To what end?
Why should I write this down, that's riveted,
Screw'd to my memory? She hath been reading late
The tale of Tereus. Here the leaf's turned down
Where Philomel gave up. I have enough.
To th' trunk again, and shut the spring of it.
Swift, swift, you dragons of the night, that dawning
May bare the raven's eye! I lodge in fear.
Though this' a heavenly angel, hell is here.
*Clock strikes*
One, two, three. Time, time!
(2. 2. 11–51)

Especially in lines 11 to 23, a view strongly resembling Othello's can be clearly recognised, manifesting itself through a number of verbal parallels. Giacomo, too, admires Innogen's white complexion ("whiter than the sheets", cf. Othello's "whiter skin of hers than snow"), smells at her breath ("'Tis her breathing that / Perfumes the chamber thus", cf. "O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade / Justice to break her sword"), desires to kiss the sleeping woman ("But kiss, one kiss", cf. "One more, one more"), associating her beauty with the image of light ("The flame o'th'taper / Bows toward her, and would underpeep her lids, / To see th'enclosèd lights", cf. "I know not where is that Promethean heat / That can thy light relume").[67] In both cases, the chaste sleeping figure is left at the fictional spectator's mercy and in both cases her beauty manages to protect her, albeit only temporarily, against his brutal force. Whereas, however, we have said that Othello's erotic imagery springs from his inability to transcend the most basic levels of his passions and senses due to his defunct faculty of reason, Giacomo's lust is very rational, almost a matter of intellectual curiosity. Unlike Othello's, Giacomo's reason is capable of restricting his passions to the extent that he can, in a methodical fashion, observe the beauty of the sleeping woman not for his own pleasure, but in order to make "some natural notes about her body" and "enrich [his] inventory" of lies, which will enable him to execute his scheme. By explicitly saying that the details of the sleeping Innogen will be willingly

[67] Cf. Tarquin's observation of the sleeping Lucrece in *The Rape of Lucrece* (stanzas 54–64), in which the violator, too, is blinded by "a greater light" of the sleeper's beauty (l. 375), admiring, among other parts of her anatomy, her "rosy cheek […] / Coz'ning the pillow of a lawful kiss" (ll. 386f) and her breasts like "ivory globes" (l. 407). The mention of Tarquin, like the mention of Tereus and Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is therefore a kind of *mise en abyme* of the scene in *Cymbeline*.

"Screw'd to [his] memory", Giacomo makes it clear that he has full control of all his mind's faculties and that his action, as opposed to Othello's, is unreservedly rational.

Just as the two fictional observers assume each a different rôle in their respective dramatic situations, the scenes themselves, despite their surface similarities, play different structural rôles within their respective plots. Othello's last visit to Desdemona marks the climax of the play, displaying the title character's moral and intellectual breakdown as the consequence of Iago's machinations and leaving the breathless audience watching, and experiencing, Othello's last chance to redeem. Giacomo, on the other hand, is not, and cannot be, charged with any of Othello's dilemmas, since "his" scene lies at the beginning of the conflict when no such overtone would be possible. The dramatic effect of the situation in *Cymbeline* is comparatively lesser and rather than any strong emotional reaction it provokes the audience's curiosity whether Giacomo will succeed in his venture. In terms of the plays' composition, Giacomo's scene more resembles Iago's fabrication of a false "nocturnal story" with Cassio sleeptalking about his secret affair with Desdemona, which is supposed to give a testimony of their guilt (*Othello* 3. 3. 423–30). Innogen's bracelet is, then, the only (and, of course, false) tangible proof of Giacomo's report, similar to Desdemona's scarf, while the subsequent reunion of Giacomo and Posthumus, during which Giacomo presents the alleged evidence and gradually makes Posthumus believe his lies (2. 4), roughly corresponds to the temptation scene from *Othello*. Giacomo is therefore clearly a parallel character to the cold-reasoned Iago rather than to the manipulated Othello, whose rôle is in *Cymbeline* assumed by Posthumus.

It is also interesting to observe the treatment of time in both scenes, which, as we have already demonstrated, significantly contributes to their dramatic language. Whereas Othello's observation of Desdemona retards the action and focuses on the conflict in Othello's mind, Giacomo's situation does not tell the audience much about his secret thoughts and rather gives the impression of a hurried event, when time flows quickly and clearly plays against the acting protagonist. The sleeping figure (as in *Othello*) represents strict boundaries to which Giacomo has to fit his plan if he wants to prevail – as long as, and only when, Innogen is asleep, he is safe. Twice during the scene he implies that he is short of time: first, when he abruptly stops admiring Innogen, referring to his "design" that cannot wait (l. 23), and, secondly, when he begs sleep to still "lie dull upon her [*i.e.*, Innogen]", because he has not yet accumulated enough evidence for Posthumus and quickly needs to gather more before Innogen awakes (l. 31). The stillness of the sleeping woman on the stage, and the haste and nervousness which take place just beside her,

produce a tension which keeps the audience's attention and, more importantly, gives them an impression of the rapid pace of the passage: although, in terms of playing time, the presentation of forty blank verses should not take more than a couple of minutes, according to times indicated in lines 2 and 51 of the scene, as much as three hours of dramatic time pass. In this respect, we could say that while the sleeping scene in *Othello* is clearly emotion-driven, taking place at the point when all the main action of the play has already taken place, in *Cymbeline*, it is much more dynamic and action-driven, being a means of the complication of the still commencing plot.

### 2. 3 "Then draw the Curtaines againe": The Case of Good Duke Humphrey

The two examples from the Shakespeare canon we have just described demonstrate what dramatic implications sleep, when depicted on the stage, might have in late Shakespeare both in terms of the plot and individual characters. *Othello* and *Cymbeline*, however, only lie at the end of a long development process and we shall soon see that Shakespeare had been interested in the dramatic potential of representing a sleeping character from the beginning of his career, constantly building upon his previous work.

What was probably Shakespeare's first history (indeed, one of first Shakespeare's dramatic works), nowadays known under its abbreviated title, *Henry VI, Part Two* (or *2 Henry VI* for short), was first published anonymously by the London stationer Thomas Millington in 1594 as *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humphrey: And the banishment and death of the Duke of Suffolke, and the Tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of VVinchester, vvith the notable Rebellion of Iacke Cade: And the Duke of Yorkes first claime vnto the Crowne*. The opulent title, which foregrounded the most popular events of the plot and served mainly as an advertisement for the potential buyers of the printed book, remained unchanged for the second edition of the piece, published by Millington in 1600. In 1619, the play was printed once again (by Thomas Pavier), this time in a volume together with *Henry VI, Part Three* (the First Octavo published by Millington in 1595), under the general title, *The Whole Contention betvveene the two Famous Houses, Lancaster and Yorke. With the Tragicall ends of the good Duke Humfrey, Ruchard Duke of Yorke, and King Henrie the sixt*. In this third edition, which for the first time bore Shakespeare's name as the author, the text also had its own separate title *The first part of the Contention of the two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster, with the death of the good Duke Humfrey*.

Finally, in 1623, the play was printed in the First Folio as *The second Part of Henry the Sixt, with the death of the Good Duke Hvmfrey*.

As we can see, of all the plot details mentioned in the – sometimes more, sometimes less descriptive – titles, only one survived the play's almost thirty-year-long publication history: the death of Humphrey of Lancaster, the first Duke of Gloucester. As shall be demonstrated in Chapter 3 of the present study, Humphrey's downfall marks a turning point of the entire cycle and is therefore rightfully foregrounded on the play's title-page as the principal attraction. How the event itself was staged, and whether the audience could immediately participate in the situation, like in the cases of *Othello* and *Cymbeline*, however, remains uncertain. The Quarto (all three quartos present more or less the same text) gives us a broad image of what the death scene was perhaps originally supposed to look like by means of a short stage direction at the beginning of scene 10: "Then the Curtaines being drawne, Duke *Humphrey* is discouered in his bed, and two men lying on his brest and smothering him in his bed. And then enter the Duke of Suffolke to them." The situation then continues in a short dialogue between the Duke of Suffolk and the murderers:

> *Suffolk.* How now sirs, what haue you dispatch him?
> *One.* I my lord, hees dead I warrant you.
> *Suffolke.* Then see the cloathes laid smooth about him still,
> That when the King comes, he may perceiue
> No other, but that he dide of his owne accord.
> *2.* All things is handsome now my Lord.
> *Suffolke.* Then draw the Curtaines againe and get you gone,
> And you shall haue your firme reward anon.
> *Exet* murtherers.[68]

The parallel scene in F1 (traditionally numbered as 3. 2) gives a somewhat different account of the same event. The Duke's death takes place off stage and the audience only learn about the crime from the subsequent dialogue:

> *Enter two or three running ouer the Stage, from the Murther of Duke Humfrey.*
> *1.* Runne to my Lord of Suffolke: let him know
> We haue dispatcht the Duke, as he commanded.
> *2.* Oh, that it were to doe: what haue we done?
> Didst euer heare a man so penitent? *Enter Suffolke.*
> *1.* Here comes my Lord.
> *Suff.* Now Sirs, haue you dispatcht this thing?
> *1.* I, my good Lord, hee's dead.
> *Suff.* Why that's well said. Goe, get you to my House,
> I will reward you for this venturous deed:
> The King and all the Peeres are here at hand.
> Haue you layd faire the Bed? Is all things well,

[68] William Shakespeare, *The First Part of the Contention Betwixt the Two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster* (London: Thomas Creed for Thomas Millington, 1594) sig. E2$^{r}$, ll. 19–30. (Original italics.)

According as I gaue direction?
*1.* 'Tis, my good Lord.
*Suff.* Away, be gone. *Exeunt.*[69]

Although both versions agree in the main point – that is, that the Duke was smothered in sleep in his very own bed by two hired assassins in a manner not so dissimilar from Desdemona's fate – the difference between both the dialogic and non-dialogic material of the two readings is simply too big to be overlooked or explained away as a corruption in the transmission of the text, especially if it points at a different scenic solution in each case. The question of the relationship between the two variants of this early sleeping scene in Shakespeare's dramatic canon and their (in)authenticity is therefore crucial not only for our understanding of the function of the motif in this specific play, but also in the context of its employment in Shakespeare's later dramatic works. For this reason, before passing any judgement upon the scene and its connection with similar dramatic situations in other plays, we should first attempt to reconstruct its original form.

At first, the problem does not seem to have a clear solution. In spite of the fact that the permissive stage direction of the First Folio "*Enter two or three*" could indicate an authorial concept, while the Quarto's unambiguous "two men lying on his brest" might represent a stage text, it would be too bold to draw from this any conclusions concerning the genesis and stage history of both variants. Arthur Freeman expressed the opinion that the Folio text is a later revision written for a theatre which lacked a discovery-space, since the stage during scenes 10 and 11 of the Quarto is horizontally divided by a curtain, whereas the parallel 3. 2 and 3. 3 of the Folio are clearly intended for a homogenous playing space.[70] This would mean that Shakespeare might have been the author of both versions or, at least, the Quarto one, which would then have a chronological primacy in terms of composition over the Folio text. Claire Saunders, on the other hand, suggests that the Quarto version of the scene is only a popular adaptation of the originally intended staging (which is preserved by the Folio text), drawing upon successful murder scenes in such plays as *Edward II* (c. 1592) by Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and the anonymous *Thomas of Woodstock* (early 1590s) to raise the attractiveness of the production with the audience.[71] This assertion suggests that the Quarto goes against the

[69] William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, ed. John Heminge and Henry Condell (London: Isaac Jaggard and Ed. Blount, 1623) sig. N3$^r$, ll. a59–b9 = 3. 2. 1–14.

[70] See Arthur Freeman, "Notes on the Text of '2 Henry VI', and the 'Upstart Crow'", *Notes and Queries* 15 (1968): 128–30 at 129.

[71] See Claire Saunders, "'Dead in His Bed': Shakespeare's Staging of the Death of the Duke of Gloucester in *2 Henry VI*", *The Review of English Studies* (New Series) 36 (1985): 19–34 at 25.

original authorial plan and raises the question of its authorship, whereas the authenticity of the Folio text is corroborated.

The lack of a critical consensus concerning the character and origin of the two variants can be seen in the execution of the situation (that is, whether Duke Humphrey is present in his bed on the stage or not) in modern editions, which is not standardised and varies according to the choice of each individual editor. There had long been a tendency to consider the Folio version as the sole reading for modern editions. H. C. Hart's first Arden edition of *2 Henry VI* (1909), for instance, lets the murder happen off stage and only contains the Folio variant of the dialogue, introduced by the stage direction "*A room of state. Enter certain Murderers, hastily*". John Dover Wilson was the first one to take the Quarto text into consideration for his Cambridge Shakespeare edition (1952). His reading preserves the Folio scenography and dialogue between the murderers and Suffolk, but at the same time makes use of the Quarto's curtains, creating an unseen bedroom, possibly with the *mimorum aedes* at the back of the stage in mind: "*A room of state, with curtains at the back concealing a room beyond. Enter certain Murderers, hastily, from behind the curtains*". Although Michael Hattaway's New Cambridge Shakespeare edition (1991) does not adopt this solution and reprints the original Folio stage direction, Dover Wilson's decision opened a question as to whether the Quarto and Folio texts do not in fact represent – in an incomplete or corrupted form – one common version of the scene which would contain material from both readings. This possibility is further explored in the influential second edition of the Oxford Shakespeare (1986, the play was edited by William Montgomery), which uses the textual portion of the First Folio, to which it prefixes the murder of Duke Humphrey in the audience's view as suggested by the Quarto.

Probably the most coherent theory explaining the difference between the two ways of staging of the scene is offered by the theatre historian Milan Lukeš in his study of Shakespeare's "bad quartos".[72] Similarly to Freeman, Lukeš notes that the Quarto version

[72] Although his monograph – published in the 1980s, when the traditional memorial reconstruction theory was being called more and more into question – has been, in many respects, superseded by more recent studies (some of which are going to be mentioned later on in the present thesis), Lukeš's chief merit lies in his sensitive dramaturgical analysis of problems arising from multiple surviving textual variants of Shakespearian dramatic works. Those of Lukeš's observations that, as the present author believes, are still pertinent to the current critical discourse are going to be mentioned here, alongside more up-to-date authors. For more recent discussion of Shakespearian textual problems, see especially Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987); Ann Thompson and Gordon McMullan (eds.), *In Arden: Editing Shakespeare* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2003); or individual annotated volumes of the Third Arden Shakespeare series or the New Cambridge Shakespeare series. For more recent scholarship on the "bad quartos" issue, see Laurie E. Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: The "Bad" Quartos and Their Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996). Maguire was the first to place the New Bibliographers' memorial reconstruction hypothesis under

of the play calls for a horizontal division of the playing space in scenes 10 (the death of the Duke of Gloucester) and 11 (the death of Cardinal Beaufort), but also for a vertical division in scene 4, showing Duchess Eleanor conjuring spirits in order to learn about the future of the king and lords from his circle. Whereas in the Folio text, Eleanor in this scene enters in the course of the action "aloft",[73] in the Quarto version, she enters the main stage with the rest of the characters at the beginning of the scene,[74] only to climb a moment later on "the Tower" from where she will watch the ceremony.[75] According to Lukeš, "the Tower" in the Quarto refers to the name of the stage property, a scenic structure (a mansion) with a small interior inside, separated from the main stage by a curtain, which, when "active", typically served as a prison cell (*i.e.*, the Tower of London – hence the name) or a bedroom and thus allowed heterogeneous, simultaneous action on the stage, whereas, when "inactive" (with the curtain drawn), it was used as the upper staging plane.[76] This supposition is indirectly proved by Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642*, which explains that the term "Tower" was, apart from its fictional meaning, "used occasionally to designate the platform above the main level of the stage".[77] Lukeš argues that similar discovery-spaces were a usual staging practice in earlier phases of early modern English drama (as another example, he mentions Henslowe's "the sittie of Rome" from the March 1598 inventory of the properties of Admiral's Men)[78] and that the technical designation of the property penetrated the theatrical text in a similar manner to the way in which real names of minor actors used to find their way into lists of fictitious *dramatis personae* (for example Sander, Bevis and Holland in *The First Part of the Contention*).[79]

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thorough and systematic scrutiny, offering a number of plausible alternatives where the critical orthodoxy only proposes a corruption caused by the reporter's faulty memory. Maguire considers an Elizabethan dramatic text as something fluid, unstable, a result of "a collaborative creation, in which the writer of the script was by no means the first to be considered" (Maguire 156). Whenever dealing with Shakespearian textual variants, the present study will analyse the texts within a critical framework similar to that Maguire uses, also taking into consideration Lukeš's dramaturgical approach, which Maguire's work lacks.

[73] Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, sig. M5$^{r}$, l. a25 = 1. 4. SD between ll. 10 and 11.

[74] Shakespeare, *The First Part of the Contention*, sig. B4$^{v}$, l. 19.

[75] Shakespeare, *The First Part of the Contention*, sig. B4$^{v}$, l. 26.

[76] See Milan Lukeš, "*První díl sporu dvou slavných rodů* a *Pravdivá tragédie Richarda, vévody z Yorku* (1594 a 1595)", in *Základy shakespearovské dramaturgie* (Prague: Charles University, 1985) 57–74, esp. 63–68.

[77] "Tower", in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642*, by Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

[78] See Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe Papers, Being Documents Supplementary to Henslowe's Diary*, ed. Walter W. Gregg (London: A. H. Bullen, 1907) 116; see Lukeš 65.

[79] See Lukeš 59–61. The mention of "the Tower" in the dialogue of the play might, however, have been intentional as well. In his study of the authorship question of *Mucedorus*, Pavel Drábek refers to the mechanicals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who, upon entering the dark forest to rehearse their play for

Besides this purely technical rôle of the mansion, the structure also used to have a very symbolical value, to which early modern audiences were sensitive: since the King's throne traditionally used to be situated above the main level of the stage, it is, Lukeš argues, possible that it was placed on the top of the Tower, meaning the mansion. The ending of the *Henry VI* trilogy would therefore show the coronation of Edward IV immediately above the place where King Henry VI was murdered in the previous scene (*3 Henry VI* 5. 6 and 5. 7).[80] Although Lukeš admits that this possibility is only hypothetical, he maintains that this scenographic practice would have been in accordance with the fundamentals of Elizabethan staging.[81]

If *The First Part of the Contention* really makes a systematic use of a mansion, as Lukeš argues, the realisation of scene 10 of the play would be as follows: 1) the curtains are closed and the playing space is homogenous; 2) the curtains are drawn apart, the function of the mansion is activated and the stage is horizontally divided into Duke Humphrey's bedroom and an undefined adjoining room (possibly a common room or a hallway); 3) the murder takes place in the bedroom, followed by a conversation between the murderers and Suffolk; 4) the curtains are closed again, the bedroom is deactivated, the murderers exit and Suffolk remains on the again undivided platform, waiting for the arrival of the King and others.

A significant aspect of this form of staging is the direct visual connection of the Duke of Gloucester's murder and the death of Cardinal Beaufort in the following scene,

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the Duke of Athens, remark that "This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house" (3. 1. 3f), ironically exploiting the symbolic character of the Elizabethan stage. Drábek maintains that "Elizabethan anti-illusionist theatre – and especially Shakespeare's – was capable of profiting from its seeming imperfections" (Pavel Drábek, "Shakespeare's Influence on *Mucedorus*", in *Shakespeare and His Collaborators over the Centuries*, ed. Pavel Drábek, Klára Kolinská and Matthew Nicholls [Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008] 45–53 at 49). The metatheatrical quality of the rehearsing sequence from the *Dream* is also commented upon by Carver, who considers it as a part of "a theatrical structure that is of particular significance for Shakespeare's own play", since it comically prepares for the entry of Bottom, "As true as truest horse that yet would never tire" (3. 1. 90), who, ultimately, enters as "a physical creature 'tired' in a different sense" (i.e., with an ass's head; Robert Carver, "Defacing God's Work: Metamorphosis and the 'Mimicall Asse' in the Age of Shakespeare", in *Transformative Change in Western Thought: A History of Metamorphosis from Homer to Hollywood*, ed. Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos [Oxford: Legenda, 2013] 273–306 at 291).

[80] An echo of this motif, which Lukeš does not mention, can be found in the sequel play, *Richard III*, in which King Richard would ascend the throne ("Thus high by thy [*i.e.*, Buckingham's] advice / And thy assistance is King Richard seated", 4. 2. 4f) located on the top of the prison cell where he had his brother previously murdered (1. 4, see below).

[81] Lukeš 68–69: "A part of this tragigrotesque royal game is the exchange of places above and below – quite literal in scenic terms – as a symbol of rise and fall, pride and ambition, and humility and humiliation, which Elizabethan theatre adopted and developed from the mediaeval contrast between *platea* and *locus*, having lent it new secular and historical contents, without, however, distracting from its universally understood language. Shakespeare, too, was an heir to this traditional, naïve and elementary symbolism – it was conveyed to him by his immediate predecessors who used to enjoy toying with it more than he did." (Translation from the Czech mine.)

which is clearly presented as a punishment for (among other sins) Humphrey's assassination. The Cardinal's agony would have been shown in the same "bedroom" with the same bed (the stage direction reads: "Enter King and *Salsbury*, and then the Curtaines be drawne, and the Cardinall is discouered in his bed, rauing and staring as if he were madde"),[82] which strengthens the link between two events of the plot: the cause and the consequence, or, in other words, the crime and the punishment. We can therefore observe similar dramatic irony to which Lukeš refers with regard to changing places above and below, realised by means of similar scenographic devices.

However, probably in the mid- or late 1590s, the use of mansions on the stage was abandoned and, with its disappearance, plays used horizontal and vertical division of the playing space less often. According to Richard Hosley's statistics, all of Shakespeare's plays that require the upper plane more than once were written by 1595 (perhaps with the exception of *King John* which might have been composed slightly later) and, interestingly enough, all that require it more than twice are somehow historically connected with Pembroke's or Strange's Men.[83] While staging on the upper playing space was still possible (simply making use of either one of the galleries or the balcony over the main platform), the inner playing space posed a problem which had to be solved by more radical retouches if the theatrical text was to be produced under new staging conditions.[84] This explains why, in the conjuring scene of the Folio version of *2 Henry VI*, Duchess Eleanor enters the stage later and directly above, since climbing on the gallery would require too much playing time, and it is also the reason why the iconic[85] representation of Duke Humphrey's bedroom in 3. 2, present on the stage simultaneously with another room of the same house, was in the Folio text replaced by an indexical representation of the chamber by a bed which, when the fictional place changed, had to be put forth and back.

Whereas we might at the moment tentatively conclude that the Quarto staging looks older than the Folio version and there is no reason to doubt Shakespeare's authorship (or, to be safe, the authorship of the author, or one of the authors, of the whole of the original text), the case of the authorial origins of the revised version is slightly more complicated.

[82] Shakespeare, *The First part of the Contention*, sig. F1$^v$, ll. 4–6. (Original italics.)

[83] See Richard Hosley, "Shakespeare's Use of a Gallery Over the Stage", *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957): 77–89 at 77–78. It should be noted here that Hosley only examines the Folio versions of the texts.

[84] The epilogue of *Henry V* indicates that the *Henry VI* trilogy was a staple part of the Chamberlain's Men's repertoire after 1594.

[85] I am using the terms "icon" and "index" here as two kinds of sign as defined by Charles S. Peirce in his late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century works, that is, the sign physically resembling the object for which it stands (in our case, a room is represented by a structure resembling one) and the sign having a factual connection to the represented object (in our case, a bed stands for an entire bedroom) respectively.

The opening stage direction of scene 25 of the Octavo of *3 Henry VI* (showing the murder of King Henry VI by Richard of Gloucester) – a text staged around the same time as the Quarto of *2 Henry VI* – reads: "Enter *Gloster* to king *Henry* in the Tower".[86] From the content of the scene it is clear that Henry is in his prison cell, where he is approached by Richard, so we might expect staging similar to Duke Humphrey's bedroom in the previous play. When discharging the discontinued scenography, the Folio version, however, replaced the stage direction with the rather bizarre "*Enter Henry the sixt, and Richard, with the Lieutenant on the Walles*".[87] One meaning of "the Tower" (the prison cell in the Tower or some other small interior) was obviously in the revision process replaced by the other of the two possibilities (the upper plane of the stage, whatever it might be). Since it is hardly conceivable that the original author would make such an obvious mistake, the question arises as to whether the dramatist had any word in the final shape of the play at all and to what extent we can, having previously established the authenticity of the Quarto reading, rely upon the Folio variant of the scene in *2 Henry VI* at all. In order to try and answer this question, we therefore have to examine both versions of the dialogue between the murderers and the Duke of Suffolk as well.

Moving from the non-dialogic portion of the situation to the dialogic one, we immediately note several interesting differences between the two versions of Duke Humphrey's murder. In the Quarto reading, the conversation between the murderers and the Duke of Suffolk is shorter almost by half than the Folio equivalent (the textual ratio Q:F is 8:14 lines). The murderers' share in the exchange is limited to a frugal announcement of Duke Humphrey's death, which, after Suffolk's instruction to tidy the bed with the corpse, is followed by an equally brief answer that the command has been executed. Although the scenic direction is missing, we might assume from the context and from the fact that the conversation is taking place over the Duke of Gloucester's dead body that the tidying of the bed by one of the murderers happens in the audience's view as well. The rôle of the assassins is therefore purely instrumental, adding little to the atmosphere of the scene.

In the Folio text, although the murderers' rôle still remains a minor one, several notable details are added. First of all, the second murderer shows regret, which, as shall be discussed later, is a topos which Shakespeare repeated several times in his later works. The

[86] William Shakespeare, *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt* (London: P. S. for Thomas Millingson, 1595) sig. E5$^{v}$, l. 20. (Original italics.)

[87] Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*, sig. Q4$^{r}$, ll. a51f = 5. 6. opening SD. (Original italics.)

man’s emotional response to the crime on the one hand gives some insight into his mind and thus moves him slightly from a mere structural device to a real character, but, more importantly, also informs the audience how terrible the sight must have been if even a professional criminal was moved. From the Duke of Suffolk’s question “Haue you layd faire the Bed? Is all things well, / According as I gaue direction?” and the first murderer’s prompt answer “’Tis, my good Lord”, it is obvious that the murder took place off stage and what the audience are getting is a verbal tableau of the situation which the spectators have not had the opportunity to see for themselves.[88] In this respect, the additional information about the emotional impact, which the scene is supposed to evoke, becomes highly significant. Secondly, the same murderer feels the need to mention that, when dying, Duke Humphrey was more penitent than any man he had ever seen. This remark is vital in the context of the later death of the Cardinal. At the end of the scene with Humphrey’s murder, staged or reported, a messenger enters to inform the Queen that “Cardinal Beaufort is at point of death. / For suddenly a grievous sickness took him” (3. 2. 373–74), adding that he is in agony, “Blaspheming God and cursing men on earth. / Sometime he talks as if Duke Humphrey’s ghost / Were by his side” (ll. 376–78). When, in the following scene, the King attends his deathbed, he comments upon the Cardinal’s state: “what a sign it is of evil life / Where death’s approach is seen so terrible” (3. 3. 5f). Then the Cardinal has another fit, thinking that he is speaking to Death about the Duke:

> *Cardinal Beaufort.* Bring me unto my trial when you will.
> Died he not in his bed? Where should he die?
> Can I make men live, whe’er they will or no?
> O, torture me no more – I will confess.
> Alive again? Then show me where he is.
> I’ll give a thousand pound to look upon him.
> He hath no eyes! The dust hath blinded them.
> Comb down his hair – look, look: it stands upright,
> Like lime twigs set to catch my wingèd soul.
> Give me some drink, and bid the apothecary
> Bring the strong poison that I bought of him.
> (3. 3. 8–18)

[88] This observation, of course, dismisses any attempt to combine the two staging forms and gives a negative answer to the question of whether the Quarto and the Folio represent one scenic execution of the situation. We might see that creating a small verbal image of a situation which originally used to be present on the stage, but was later eliminated in the revision, was a common practice. Whereas in Scene 5. 4 of the standard text of *Richard III*, Richmond directly addresses Sir William Brandon on the stage, informing him that “you shall bear my standard” (l. 4), in Q1, which tries to reduce the number of extras in the scene, the direct order is replaced by the King’s question “Where is Sir William Brandon, he shall beare my standerd” (William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third* [London: Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise, 1597] sig. L2$^{v}$, l. 6), making a verbal substitution for the now extrascenic reality.

Having heard this, the King addresses the Cardinal, asking him "Lord Cardinal, if thou think'st of heavenly bliss, / Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope" (ll. 26f). Beaufort, however, dies without making a sign. Herbert Geisen stresses that the Cardinal's mode of dying and his failure to ask God for forgiveness "underline the work of conscience, which in his case, however, does not awake repentance but rather desperation of the guilty person and serves the purposes of *divine retribution*".[89] Beaufort's last moments summarise his past evil deeds and confirm his divorce from God, upon which the Earl of Warwick's judgment follows: "So bad a death argues a monstrous life" (l. 30).

Instead of the rather crude visual connection of the two events by staging them in the same bed, the Folio text – partly by means of a verbal description, partly by means of actual scenic presentation – juxtaposes two very different deaths of characters who are presented, not only as arch-enemies from the very first scene of the first part of the trilogy, but also representatives of two opposite political camps: Duke Humphrey had always been loyal to the King and had several times proved his virtuousness, whereas Cardinal Beaufort, one of the chief machinators against the King's authority, had betrayed the fundamentals of his post. Although the first of the deaths is not in this version directly staged, its circumstances and the impression conveyed by one of the murderers' words are powerful enough to prompt the theatre attendees to create a mental image of a peacefully sleeping figure, oblivious to any danger, being approached by a pair of cut-throats and, despite the reluctance of at least one of them, subsequently smothered. Moreover, unlike the Quarto version, the Folio offers a posthumous image of the Duke of Gloucester as a pure character, making the commons' riot at the end of the scene more understandable. In contrast, the Cardinal's waking nightmares – at first only reported, but shortly after shown on the stage – clearly witness to his crimes and are presented as a rightful punishment. Since both the events are introduced within a short period of playing time, it seems dramatically more sensitive to stage only the second one, especially when the Cardinal's death marks the climactic scene at the end of the third act, dividing the play into two distinct movements.[90]

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[89] Herbert Geisen, *Die Dimension des Metaphysischen in Shakespeares Historien* (Frankfurt am Main: Studienreihe Humanitas Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1974) 36–37: "[B]esonders sein qualvoller Tod und seine Unfähigkeit, Gott um Gnade zu bitten, [unterstreichen] das unbeeinflußbare Wirken des Gewissens, das hier allerdings nich die Reue, sondern die Verzweiflung des Schuldigen weckt und im Dienste der *divine retribution* steht." (Original italics.)

[90] Emrys Jones questions the traditional division between the third and fourth acts of *2 Henry VI*, asserting that Suffolk's death of 4. 1 is one of the immediate consequences of Duke Humphrey's murder (see Emrys Jones 75) and therefore should finish the third act. Although this argument is not without merit, it is obvious that between 3.3 and 4. 1 of the play, a considerable dramatic time passes which might serve as a good occasion for an interval. Moreover, the Duke of Somerset, whose head appears together with Suffolk's

From the present analysis, we might draw several conclusions. First, both versions of Duke Humphrey's murder can be considered as authentic, in the sense that neither of them contradicts the author's dramaturgical plan, being a hasty, occasional or popular revision. The Quarto represents an older form of the scene, making use of a scenographic device which became obsolete in the mid-1590s and abandoned by Elizabethan playwrights. When adapting the play for new staging conditions, the dramatist, however, decided not only to discard the old scenography, but also add an emotional element to the dramatic situation, which provokes a strong response on the part of the audience and which became the focus of Shakespeare's later works. In this respect, we might consider the Folio reading as dramatically superior, written by a more mature hand, with a clear dramaturgical plan in mind. In the light of the revised version's use of motifs and techniques which, as we shall see, are consistent with later plays by Shakespeare, we might also be reasonably sure that, unlike the revision of the staging of King Henry VI's death in the third part of the trilogy, the later version of Duke Humphrey's murder was most probably begotten by the original play's author himself.[91]

## 2. 4 Remorseful Villains, Plaintive Kings

*2 Henry VI* is very probably the earliest Shakespeare's use of the image of a sleeping figure as a characterization, as well as structural, device, paving the way for more elaborate employments of the motif in his later works. The most immediate heir to the play is apparently *Richard III*, and this is so not only because it closes the saga of which *2 Henry VI* is part. At the beginning of Act 1, Scene 4 of the play, the imprisoned Duke of Clarence confides to Brackenbury, the Keeper of the Tower, what he saw at night, "full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights" (l. 2). In dream, he was freed from imprisonment by his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Travelling at sea and retrospecting the events of the War of the Roses, Gloucester suddenly stumbled and struck Clarence into the water (ll. 9–20). Suffering unbearable pains of drowning, Clarence was faced by "sights of ugly death within [his] eyes" (l. 23), seeing "a thousand fearful wrecks, / Ten thousand men that fishes

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in Duke Humphrey's dream of 1. 2, is killed as late as 5. 2 and his head shown in 1. 1 of *3 Henry VI*, although his death, too, could be regarded as a consequence of Humphrey's political and physical liquidation.

[91] For a more detailed discussion of early-modern staging practices and Shakespearian acting space, see Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984); Martin White, *Renaissance Drama in Action: An Introduction to Aspects of Theatre Practice and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1998); Andrew Gurr and Mariko Ichikawa, *Staging in Shakespeare's Theatres* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000); and Mariko Ichikawa, *The Shakespearean Stage Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013).

gnawed upon" (ll. 24f), as well as lost treasures scattered on the bottom of the sea among human bones, some glowing inside skulls and their empty eye-holes.[92] At this point, Clarence wished to give up the soul and end the agony, but the water "smothered it within [his] panting bulk, / Who almost burst to belch it in the sea" (ll. 40f). In the final stage of his dream, the Duke passed the river Styx into Hades, where he met with the ghost of the Earl of Warwick and Edward, Prince of Wales, for whose deaths, depicted in *3 Henry VI*, he was responsible. The ghosts accused him of perjury and treachery. Then a legion of souls surrounded him and howled and cried so loudly that he was finally awoken, trembling (ll. 43–63).

As can be seen, Clarence's horrid dream in many respects resembles Cardinal Beaufort's tormenting visions. Both men encounter ghosts of their victims, both suffer the pains of hell which they are unable to escape and both stand face to face with the vivid image of death approaching. Whereas, in the case of the Cardinal, it is King Henry VI who rightly identifies the torments as "a sign of evil life", in *Richard III*, Clarence himself, as "a Christian faithful man" (l. 4), immediately admits his guilt and repents:

> *Clarence.* Ah, Brackenbury, I have done these things,
> That now give evidence against my soul,
> For Edward's sake; and see how he requited me.
> O God! If my deep prayers cannot appease thee
> But thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds,
> Yet execute thy wrath in me alone.
> O spare my guiltless wife and my poor children.
> (1. 4. 66–68 + additional passage C)

When modelling the Tower scene, Shakespeare seems to have had in mind the deaths of Humphrey and Beaufort, whose crucial features he combined: with the Cardinal, Clarence shares the punishment for his previous sins in the form of restless sleep; with the Duke, he has in common the final penitent turning to God, which gives him hope for divine mercy in the afterlife. We can also observe a growing interest of the young dramatist in the motif of dreams conveying additional information about the sleeper. Whereas in *2 Henry VI*, the account of Cardinal Beaufort's nightmares contains just enough details to underline the wickedness of the character, in the Duke of Clarence's case, the dream is transformed into a most impressive political and personal narrative, for which we would hardly find a parallel in any other Elizabethan play. Clarence's uncanny nocturnal experience is one of many aspects of *Richard III*, in which we can observe the qualitative gap between the older *Henry VI* plays, which were probably limited by the framework of older texts by other

[92] Cf. the undersea imagery of Ariel's song "Full Fathom Five" (*The Tempest* 1. 2. 400–406).

playwrights, and the last part of the tetralogy, which was one of the first opportunities for Shakespeare to deploy independently his dramatic ambitions.

Similarities between *2 Henry VI* and *Richard III*, however, continue. When Clarence falls asleep again, two murderers enter, hired by Gloucester to kill his brother. With Brackenbury having left the cell to give a report to the King, their task to kill the sleeping, defenceless man should be an easy one. Yet they both in turn show a reluctance to murder, being afraid that they will "be damned for killing him [*i.e.*, the Duke of Clarence], from which no warrant can defend [them]" (ll. 106f). After the series of hesitations and reassurances, the first murderer finally summons up his courage, stabs the now awoken Clarence, and carries his corpse off scene to drown him in the butt of malmsey. The second murderer, however, remains so shattered by the crime that he is unable to help his accomplice. Instead, he starts regretting what has just been done:

> *Second Murderer.* A bloody deed, and desperately dispatched!
> How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
> Of this most grievous, guilty murder done.
> *Enter first murderer*
> *First Murderer.* How now? What mean'st thou, that thou help'st me not?
> By heaven, the Duke shall know how slack you have been!
> *Second Murderer.* I would he knew that I had saved his brother.
> Take thou the fee, and tell him what I say,
> For I repent me that the Duke is slain. *Exit*
> (1. 4. 259–66)

The second murderer's words echo, although again in a more elaborate form, the line "Oh, that it were to doe: what haue we done?" pronounced by one of the assassins of Duke Humphrey in virtually the same situation. It is possible that when *Richard III* was first staged, the theatregoers still remembered Humphrey's death well and understood the scenes in the context of one another. Although Clarence is undoubtedly a more ambiguous character than Duke Humphrey, the similar scenographic realisation of his end and the emotive reaction from the least expected side naturally evoke the spectators' sympathy, showing the Duke in a generally positive light.

George Plantagenet's nocturnal experience and his subsequent murder is Shakespeare's own addition, not present in any of *Richard III*'s dramatic antecedents. At the beginning of a Latin version of the story by Thomas Legge (1535–1607), *Richardus Tertius* (1579), Queen Elizabeth briefly mentions that "Gloucester has brought death to his brother" (*fratri suo mortem intulit Glocestrius*, l. 95),[93] and, in the anonymous *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (1588–1594), the circumstances of Clarence's death are

[93] Thomas Legge, *Richardus Tertius*, ed. and trans. Dana F. Sutton (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

revealed by the allegorical figure of Truth in the expository scene of the play[94] and repeated shortly after, when Richard confesses in a soliloquy that he has “remoued such logs out of [his] sight, as [his] brother *Clarence* / And king Henry the sixt”.[95]

There were two reasons why Shakespeare needed to expand the story of Clarence’s death into an independent scene: first, whereas Clarence only plays a minor part in the story of *Richard III*, his rôle was a significant one in the previous part of the tetralogy, which describes how Richard and George helped their brother Edward to the throne. Discharging such a strong character by means of another character’s frugal remark would not be, in the context of the entire cycle, dramatically desirable (both *Richardus Tertius* and *The True Tragedy* are, on the other hand, stand-alone plays with minimum reminiscences of the events preceding the action). Secondly, showing Clarence’s death on the stage gave Shakespeare an opportunity to show Richard’s cruelty for the first time. The “most unnatural” murder – in the words of the anonymous *The True Tragedy*[96] – is supposed to shock the audience and establish the mood of the play.[97] It also prepares the ground for the murder of Richard’s young nephews in 4. 3 (see below) and, finally, the procession of the ghosts of Richard’s eleven victims in 5. 5 (see section 2. 7 of the present chapter), whose deaths are either directly shown on the stage or given space in the form of report. The moving scene of the Duke of Clarence’s end therefore primarily serves as a means of delineating of the character of the Duke of Gloucester, who is the primary interest of the play, and at the same time contributes to the unity of the plot.

From a purely literary point of view, the exact source of Clarence’s dream has not been fully established. Harold F. Brooks connects the images of the undersea treasures and dead men’s bones in the second part of the dream with Books II and III of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, while the description of Hades and Clarence’s encounter with the ghosts of his victims of the third part is, according to Brooks, drawn upon bits and pieces from various plays by Seneca (*Hercules Furens*, *Octavia*, *Hippolytus*, *Medea*, *Hercules Oetaeus*, *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes* and the apocryphal *Octavia*).[98] Shakespeare, however, might have had another source of inspiration which was more at hand and enjoyed a great

[94] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third* (London: Thomas Creede, 1594) sig. A3[v], ll. 20–24.
[95] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. B4[r], ll. 25f. (Original italics, contraction expanded.)
[96] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. A3[v], l. 22.
[97] Cf. *Hamlet* 1. 5. 25, when King Hamlet’s ghost refers to his “most unnatural murder”. When the young Hamlet decides to re-enact his father’s death (3. 2), showing the sleeping King on the stage being murdered by his brother (another parallel with Richard and George), the image has such a powerful impact upon King Claudius that he forgets to control himself and reveals his guilt.
[98] See Harold F. Brooks, “‘Richard III’: Antecedents of Clarence’s Dream”, *Shakespeare Survey* 32 (1979): 145–150.

popularity at the time – Sidney's *Arcadia*, more specifically its Book V, which contains an episode bearing a striking resemblance to both Clarence's situation and the contents of his dream, describing Gynecia's night in prison before her trial.

Believing that she had killed her husband, Duke Basilius, Gynecia "did crucify her own soul" to the extent that "[t]here was never tyrant exercised his rage with more grievous torments upon any he most hated". While still awake, despairing over her husband's death, she imagined "she saw strange sights, and that she heard the cries of hellish ghosts". When she was finally able to fall asleep, she dreamt that "Philanax [the Duke's regent] was haling her by the hair of the head, and having put out her eyes, was ready to throw her into a burning furnace", only to see subsequently "her husband making the complaint of his death to Pluto, and the magistrates of that infernal region contending in great debate to what eternal punishment they should allot her".[99] While Clarence was experiencing a similar agony, he unsuccessfully "strive[d] / To yield the ghost" (1.4.36f); Sidney's Gynecia, likewise, "would fain have killed herself, but knew not how" and "feared death, and yet desired death".[100] The similarities between the two accounts and the closeness of the specific motifs employed in them indicate that Clarence's nocturnal visions might have indeed been modelled within the framework of Sidney's older work.[101]

The prototype of the situation with the two murderers coming to the Tower to kill Clarence is, on the other hand, obvious: apart from a general inspiration by the aforementioned sequence in *2 Henry VI* and its possible dramatic antecedents, the main source Shakespeare used is the later scene of the murder of the two young sons of King Edward IV, Edward and Richard, which, unlike the episode of Clarence's death, is to be found in both of the dramatic sources of *Richard III*. In *The True Tragedy*, the two "pittilesse villaines"[102] hired by Richard's follower Terrell are before the murderous act engaged in a conversation, during which one of them expresses his misgivings:

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[99] Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 316–17.

[100] Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 317.

[101] The question, of course, is whether Shakespeare could know *Arcadia* when writing *Richard III*. Although Sidney's novel reached print as early as 1590, the episode in question was first included in the hybrid second edition of 1593. *Annals of English Drama* gives as the estimated date of the composition of the play years 1591 to 1597 (see Alfred Harbage, *The Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, 2nd ed. [London: Methuen, 1964] 58–59). Chambers dates it as early as 1592/3 (see E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Vol. 1 [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1930] 270), while Lukeš prefers the year 1594, connecting this relatively stabilised text only with Shakespeare's existential stability, *i.e.*, with his affiliation with Lord Chamberlain's Men (see Lukeš 75). The possibility cannot be ruled out either that Shakespeare might have had access to the manuscript of *Arcadia*, circulating among selected audiences from the 1580s, through one of his patrons or the Herbert family (see Charles R. Forker, "How Did Shakespeare Come by His Books?", in *New Studies in the Shakespearean Heroine*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen P, 2004] 109–20 at 116–18).

[102] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. E4$^r$, l. 12.

> *Dent.* I promise thee Will, it greeues me to see what mone these yoong Princes make, I had rather then fortie pounds I had nere tane it in hand, tis a dangerous matter to kill innocent princes, I like it not.
> *Will.* Why you base slave, are you faint hearted, a little thing would make me strike thee, I promise thee.
> *Dent.* Nay, go forward, for now I am resolute: but come, lets too it.[103]

The text, which is of a corrupt character, does not give enough information about the actual staging of the scene, so it is not clear whether the murder of the princes takes place off stage or whether the murderers enter the princes' chamber in a horizontally divided playing space, commit the crime before the eyes of the audience, and then return to the original, unidentified room (probably a hallway in the Tower). The connection of the situation with Shakespeare's depiction of the circumstances of Clarence's murder is, however, evident.[104]

In *Richardus Tertius*, Thomas Legge lets the regicide happen off stage and the audience are informed of the details of the deed via one of the murderers' report, describing how they "tiptoed into their cell" (*cubile nos intramus occulto pede*, l. 2964) when "each nephew lay stretched out in bed and both boys were enjoying a pleasant sleep" (*dum nepos uterque lecto sternitur / dulcesque somnos carperet geminus puer*, ll. 2963f). The assassins wrapped the princes in their bedclothes, leaned on them and "[a]fter their faces were covered by feather pillows and their windways blocked by mattresses, soon both were deprived of air and smothered, since they could not breathe" (*ubi plumea clauduntur ora culcitra / vocemque prohibent pressa pulvinaria, / mox suffocantur adempto uterque spiritu, / quia pervium spirantibus non est iter*, ll. 2967–70). Although Dighton's methodical description gives a vivid image of the crime, no sign of remorse or hesitation, which can be observed in the Shakespeare version or the anonymous play, is recognisable from his speech. After he finishes his account, however, the curtain opens and the two dead bodies are shown to Tyrell, Brackenbury and, most importantly, the audience. Upon this, Brackenbury exclaims exasperatedly, "Do I see the princes' livid bodies? Now, alas, by this infanticide this bed is made a bier. What harsh man can restrain his tears in the face of such evils?" (*videone corpora regulorum livida? / funestus heu iam caede puerili thorus! / quis lacrymas durus malis vultus negat?*, ll. 2972–74), accentuating the horrible nature of the spectacle – so atrocious that even a villain would be moved by it. When left

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[103] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. F1$^{r}$, ll. 22–29.

[104] From the same scene of *The True Tragedy*, Shakespeare probably borrowed another fine detail for one of his earlier plays: one of the murderers of the princes is called Will Slawter. When the Prince of Wales hears his name for the first time, he expresses his hope that "he come[s] not to slaughter my brother and me, for from murther and slaughter, good Lord deliuer vs" (sig. F1$^{r}$, ll. 13f). When in 4. 1 of *2 Henry 6* the Duke of Suffolk hears the name of his future murderer, Walter Whitmore, he remarks, "Thy name affrights me, in whose sound is death. / A cunning man did calculate my birth / And told me that by 'water' I should die" (ll. 34–36).

alone on the stage, he once more laments the death of the “innocent princes, the pious boys” (*innocentes principes, pueros pios*, l. 2994), berating not the hired murderers, but Richard: “Oh the fierce cruelty of our age! Oh the King’s harsh spirit! Oh his barbaric mind, savagely overthrowing the fixed laws of nature!” (*o saeva nostri temporis crudelitas! / o regis animus dirus! o mens barbara, / secura turbans iura naturae ferox!*, ll. 2991–93)

Although both dramatic situations – that is, Shakespeare’s account of the Duke of Clarence’s murder and the infanticide in the pre-Shakespearian plays – mark different stages of the development of the narrative, their common formal elements (a sleeping pious victim, two murderers, regret and horror over the dead bodies, underlying the bestiality of the act) produce in both cases a similar dramatic effect and serve the same technical function. By prefixing the episode to the beginning of the plot and connecting it, as we shall soon see, with two more sequences in the middle and at the end of the play, both structurally echoing the first one, Shakespeare, however, makes a further step and incorporates the scene into the very syntax of the play, thus, in a strongly visual and impactive form, foregrounding the theme of the rise and fall of the story’s central character and strengthening the dramatic arc of the plot.

It is, therefore, not surprising that, when modelling his version of the princes’ murder, Shakespeare decided not to show the same situation on the stage again, thus avoiding repetition and overloading the narrative, which would consequently lessen the scene’s effect.[105] Instead, he restricts the scene to Tyrell’s detailed account, creating a solely verbal image of the situation:

> *Tyrell.* The tyrannous and bloody deed is done –
> The most arch deed of piteous massacre
> That ever yet this land was guilty of.
> Dighton and Forrest, whom I did suborn
> To do this ruthless piece of butchery,
> Albeit they were flesh’d villains, bloody dogs,
> Melted with tenderness and mild compassion,
> Wept like two children in their deaths’ sad story.
> ‘O thus’ quoth Dighton, ‘lay those tender babes’;
> ‘Thus, thus’, quoth Forrest, ‘girdling one another
> Within their innocent alabaster arms.
> Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,

[105] We can, however, find in Shakespeare’s text traces of the original dramaturgy. In Scene 12 of *The True Tragedy*, Tyrell, on the orders of Richard, finds a couple of murderers to kill the two young princes in the Tower. As we have already determined, Shakespeare used the murdering sequence of this scene to show Clarence’s death in 1. 4 of *Richard III*. In 4. 2 of the Shakespeare version, however, Richard is desperate to find someone who would ensure the assassination of the princes. Finally he asks Tyrell, who hires (another) two murderers, although Richard could have used the pair of competent men from 1. 4, whom he originally had no trouble to secure.

> And in their summer beauty kissed each other.
> A book of prayers on their pillow lay,
> Which once', quoth Forrest, 'almost changed my mind.
> But O! the devil' – there the villain stopped,
> When Dighton thus told on, 'We smothered
> The most replenishèd sweet work of nature,
> That from the prime creation e'er she framed.'
> Thus both are gone, with conscience and remorse.
> They could not speak, and so I left them both,
> To bear this tidings to the bloody king.
> (4. 3. 1–22)

Whereas, at the beginning of the play, the emotional reaction of the spectators upon the Duke of Clarence's death originates from the situation itself and its presentation, here it is the imagery of the soliloquy that makes it one of the most moving moments of Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre, even overpowering any of the evil deeds of the play which have been committed so far. To achieve this effect, Shakespeare fills the speech with graphic details, absent from both earlier dramatic versions, not dissimilar to those which Othello and Giacomo are struck by when they set their eyes on their victims.

As the viewers are told, the princes (the "tender babes") lay in their bed when the murderers entered their room, which again evokes an image of unarmed chastity left to the mercy of brutal force (which is, in addition, reluctant to commit the crime). The boys had "innocent alabaster arms" (cf. Duncan's "innocent sleep" and Desdemona's snow white skin, "smooth as monumental alabaster"), their lips looked like "four red roses on a stalk, / And in their summer beauty kissed each other" (cf. Innogen's "Rubies unparagoned, / How dearly they do't!" or Desdemona's beauty, also compared by Othello to a rose) and by their heads lay a book of prayers, which only stresses the princes' incorruptness and closeness to God (cf. Duke Humphrey's penitence, Clarence's words of faith or Desdemona's prayers before she dies). All these details have a sole objective: to give the act attributes of a crime not only against a man, but also against nature and God (cf. the exclamation of *Richardus Tertius*'s Brackenbury, "Oh his barbaric mind, savagely overthrowing the fixed laws of nature!"), and consequently show the criminal – who is neither Tyrell nor his men, but the "bloody king" – as a monster, devoid of elementary human qualities. Although all these individual images and motifs can be, in more or less explicit forms, found scattered through the plays of Shakespeare's antecedents, their concentration in one compact speech, accompanied by numerous descriptive details designed to attack the audience's imagination, makes far greater dramatic impact.

An important aspect of both sleeping scenes in *Richard III* is their position in the *sujet* of the play. *Richard III* consists of two distinct halves, probably originally meant to

be separated by an interval: Acts 1 to 3, following Richard, the Duke of Gloucester's struggle for the throne, completed by his coronation; and Acts 4 and 5, describing King Richard's downfall, completed by the coronation of the Duke of Richmond. Each of the halves, to an extent, presents a self-contained movement, not only bordered by different historical events, but also marked by a different central character.

Emrys Jones notes that whereas in the first three acts, Richard is "overpoweringly energetic, resourceful, witty, and sardonically amusing", in the second part of the play he becomes "the Tyrant, ripe for overthrow, grim, sleepless, friendless, and, on the night before death, anticipating God's judgement".[106] Martin Hilský makes a similar observation, noting that in the course of the full first three acts of the Shakespeare tragedy, Richard performs one histrionic act after another, while beginning with Act 4, his energy and cynical humour fade.[107] Although not explicitly mentioning King Richard as an example, Zdeněk Stříbrný asserts that Shakespeare's tragic heroes often experience, "within the terse temporal limits of their plays, a profound change of character".[108] This technique of leaps in character ageing, which Stříbrný calls the "double age", is employed to give the sense of a development of character and, by extension, the entire plot within a short playing time. In the case of *Richard III*, the fast-paced *sujet* depicts Richard between the funeral of Henry VI in 1471 and the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, a historical period long enough to affect significantly the image of both the real and dramatic character.

What, however, stays, in spite of all the differences, is the unbroken chain of murders and cruelty, which contribute to consistency of Richard's personality. The two most vicious and most vivid murders of Richard's political career take the dominant position at the beginnings of the two parts of the play, establishing the mood of the respective movements of the plot and at the same time constantly keeping the audience aware that under all circumstances, Richard remains an unscrupulous villain, who has to be rightfully punished at the end.

Whereas the aforementioned scene of Act 5, containing the Duke of Richmond's and Richards's represented dreams of the night before the battle of Bosworth Field, will be discussed in section 2. 7 with other characterisational dreams of the Shakespeare canon, let

[106] Emrys Jones 73.

[107] See Martin Hilský, *Shakespeare a jeviště svět* (Prague: Academia, 2010) 334–35.

[108] Zdeněk Stříbrný, "The Genesis of Double Time in Pre-Shakespearean and Shakespearean Drama", 1969, in *Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Eastern and Central European Studies*, ed. Jerzy Limon and Jay L. Halio (Newark, DE: U of Delaware P, 1993) 108–127 at 117.

us now focus our attention to another royal figure and its sleep, namely King Henry IV in the second part of the historical cycle of the same name, written just a couple of years after *Richard III*. Although the play bears the King's name, he only appears on the stage twice, each time with the concept of sleep playing an important rôle for the overall image of his character.

The first of the scenes takes place in the middle of the night, showing the King involved in war business. When he remains alone, he confides to the audience that he suffers from terrible insomnia, suggesting that it is the kingship that prevents him from having a peaceful night's rest:

> [*King Henry.*] How many thousand of my poorest subjects
> Are at this hour asleep? O sleep, O gentle sleep,
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
> And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
> Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
> Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
> And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
> Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
> Under the canopies of costly state,
> And lulled with sound of sweetest melody?
> O thou dull god, why li'st thou with the vile
> In loathsome beds, and leav'st the kingly couch
> A watch-case or a common 'larum-bell?
> Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
> And in the visitation of the winds,
> Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
> Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them
> With deafening clamour in the slippery clouds,
> That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?
> Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
> To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,
> And in the calmest and most stillest night,
> With all appliances and means to boot,
> Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down.
> Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.
> (*2 Henry IV* 3. 1. 4–31)

Marcus Noll stresses that the connection of sleeplessness and the mighty had been, since classical antiquity, a popular topos, which, in a dramatic form, "resonated with the emotions of common people".[109] On the other hand, he is very sceptical about the function of similar lengthy soliloquies discussing the issue with no apparent relation to the action on

[109] Noll 120: "[D]ieser Kontrast ist erst durch die Macht Shakespeare scher Vorstellungskraft vom rational konstruierten, akademischen Bild yu einem auch in den Emotionen einfacher Menschen auf Resonanz stoßenden, lebendigen Inbegriff der Härten und Entbehrungen des herrschaftlichen Daseins geworden."

the stage, claiming that they are "on the border of dramaturgical tediousness" and "their form and their highly artificial acrobatics of speech appeal much more often to the reader than to the audience".[110] Such an assertion is rather superficial and could easily be applied to any longer non-dramatic speech in the Shakespearian canon, although it is not, in principle, altogether wrong. If we accept Lukeš's conclusion that some early editions of Shakespeare's plays are not necessarily heavily corrupted texts, but rather acting versions of the dramatic works (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry V*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Hamlet*) or versions pointing towards a theatrical revision (*Richard III*),[111] we may indeed discern a general tendency of Shakespearian stage adaptations to reduce lyrical and rhetorical passages in favour of elementary dramatics and to replace complicated and artificial words with simpler and more popular terms, most probably to relieve long rôles on the one hand and for the benefit of the unsophisticated audience on the other. However, although in the case of the 3,255 line-long[112] *2 Henry IV*, some abridgement must have taken place (Alfred Hart determines the length of a standard stage version of an Elizabethan and Jacobean play as 2,300 lines),[113] King Henry IV's soliloquy can hardly be considered as a mere tedious ornament with "highly artificial acrobatics of speech" and no relation to the plot, which could be well spared on the stage. On the contrary, it significantly contributes to the delineation of the central character of the first three plays of the tetralogy and draws the audience's attention to some of the cycle's most important themes and motifs.

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[110] Ibid.: "Die […] langen Monologe über rein philosophische Fragestellungen ohne direkten Handlungsbezug befinden sich allerdingd manchmal an der Grenze zu dramaturgischer Eintönigheit und mögen in vielen Inszenierungen die Geduld gerade des einfachen Publikums über Gebühr strapazieren – nicht umsonts gelten gerade diese Stellen als klassisches Anthologiematerial und nicht als Glanzlichter der Bühne; ihre Form und ihre hochartifizielle Sprachakrobatik sprechen oft sehr viel mehr den Leser als den Zuschauer an –, bieten aber für diese Untersuchung einen hervorragenden Zugang zu allen Nuancen des Themas."

[111] See Lukeš, esp. the chapter "Dobrozdání špatných textů", pp. 137–53. Although her findings are different in particular details, Kathleen O. Irace, too, has advocated the theatrical nature of early printed editions of Shakespeare's plays (see Kathleen O. Irace, *Reforming the "Bad" Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions* [Newark, DE: U of Delaware P, 1994]). Recently, Andrew Gurr has expressed the opinion that "[m]ost of the playbooks we know are authorial variants of the scripts, not the scripts licensed for performance. […] The extended versions that found their way into print mislead us about what Elizabethans saw on stage. Most of Shakespeare's printed texts are versions set from manuscript preceding the 'maximal' allowed books that the company reworked for their slimmer stage scripts" (Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespeare Company, 1594–1642* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004] 14). An example of such a "slimmer stage script" is for Gurr Q1 of *Henry V*, which is commonly marked as a "bad" quarto.

[112] The lengths of the plays are taken from Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004).

[113] See A. Hart, "The Time Allotted for Representation of Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays", *The Review of English Studies* 8 (1932): 395–413. Hart's estimation is based upon the premise that the standard length of an early-modern play staged by most London theatres was around two hours. Hart's findings were, however, later questioned by David Klein in "Time Allotted for an Elizabethan Performance", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18 (1967): 434–38.

Although the King formulates his invocation to sleep (which again echoes Ovid and also shares many parallels with Macbeth's) as one long question, he in fact knows the answer very well. The reason why "gentle sleep" avoids Henry's bedroom lies in his deposition of the lawful king in the first part of Shakespeare's second historical saga. According to the official Tudor doctrines of kingship, all the worldly power originated from God, and therefore to lay hands upon the magistrate meant to impair the divine order and risk chaos, subversion and civil war. Anglican homilies, which were read in every English church on Sundays, stress that "euen the wicked rulers haue their power and aucthoritie from God. And therefore it is not lawfull for their subiectes, by force to resist them, although thei abuse their power",[114] even asserting that "in deed a rebell is worse then the worst Prince, and rebellion is worse then the worste gouernment of the worst prince that hitherto hath ben".[115] King Henry IV is aware of this, admitting to the unlawful way in which he obtained the crown and the consequent tragedy which it meant for the country when meeting for the last time his son Harry, the future King Henry V:

> [*King Henry.*] […] God knows, my son,
> By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways
> I met this crown; and I myself know well
> How troublesome it sat upon my head.
> […]
> For all the soil of the achievement goes
> With me into the earth. It seemed in me
> But as an honour snatched with boisterous hand;
> And I had many living to upbraid
> My gain of it by their assistances,
> Which daily grew to quarrel and to bloodshed,
> Wounding supposèd peace.
> (4. 3. 312–15, 318–24)

Already at the end of *Richard II*, the newly crowned King Henry IV proclaims over Richard II's corpse that "[he] hate[s] the murderer, love[s] him [*i.e.*, King Richard] murderèd" (5. 6. 40) and promises to "make a voyage to the Holy land / To wash this blood off from [his] guilty hand" (ll. 49f). The promise to lead a crusade keeps appearing in the following two plays: *1 Henry IV* starts with the King intending to send soldiers to the Holy Land, but the domestic rebellion crosses his plans (1. 1). In *2 Henry IV*, the King assures the lords that once the rebels are finally defeated, "We would, dear lords, unto the Holy

[114] "An Exhortation, Concernyng Good Ordre and Obedience, to Rulers and Magistrates", in *Certayne Sermons, or Homelies, Appoynted by the Kynges Maiestie, to Bee Declared and Redde* (London: Richard Grafton, 1547), sig. R3$^{v}$. (Contraction expanded.)

[115] John Jewel, "An Homilee against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion", in *The Second Tome of Homilees, of Such Matters as were Promised, and Intituled in the Former Part of Homilees* (London: Richard Jugge and John Cawood, 1571) 553.

Land" (3. 1. 103), mentioning his plans twice more later on, shortly before his death (4. 3. 339, 364–69). The audience are this way kept reminded of the King's initial sin. The motif of his guilt, as well as his desire to exculpate himself, thus hangs over the entire second historical tetralogy. Still in *Henry V*, before the decisive battle of Agincourt, King Henry V repeats his father's lamentation that no king, "laid in bed majestical, / Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave / Who with a body filled and vacant mind / gets him to rest" (4. 1. 249–52), only to beg God a few moments later to "think not upon the fault / My father made in compassing the crown" (ll. 257f). This dramatic and thematic unity enables Shakespeare to examine one of his favourite topics, central to almost all his histories: the nature of kingship, its advantages and disadvantages, its dangers and gains, and, above all, its legitimacy. Henry's sleepless nocturnal contemplations and his lamenting speech about sleep giving rest to the poor but denying it to the King perfectly illustrate Dekker's words, quoted in the introductory section of the present chapter, that whereas "[b]eggers in their beds take as much pleasure as Kings […] if a Tyrant would giue his crowne for an houres slumber, it cannot be bought". Although Henry IV is not a tyrant of Richard III's dimensions, his legitimacy as a king is questionable at the least.

The second of the two regal scenes of *2 Henry IV* presents the old, ailing King on his deathbed. Unlike the previous scene, whose dramatic potential lies in the verbal imagery, the power of this dramatic situation is based on its visual symbolism and refined structure. Although the rebellion has been finally crushed, Henry knows that he has not time to lead the army to Jerusalem anymore (ironically, the scene takes place in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey) and is vexed with worries that, under the reign of his prodigal son, England will only see "unguided days / And rotten times" (4. 3. 59f). Before Harry arrives and is given an opportunity to defend his honour, the King falls asleep. It is not, however, a healthy, beneficiary sleep: as one of his sons remarks, "His eye is hollow, and he changes much" (l. 138), and, when Harry finally enters the stage and is left with the King alone, he considers his grim look to be a sign of death, a sleep "sound indeed" (l. 166).

Thinking his father dead, the Prince declares his filial love for the King, picks up the crown from his pillow and leaves. The King, however, awakes and, seeing the crown gone, calls for his sons and the Earl of Warwick. Having concluded that the crown must have been taken by Harry, he accuses him in absence of ingratitude and seeking to his death. Upon this, Harry re-enters the stage, the lords leave, and, despite the King's initial

false assumptions, the father and the son are ultimately reconciled. The King can now die peacefully, knowing that the country is in good hands.

King Henry's worried, death-like sleep is symptomatic for his entire government, which Shakespeare's historical cycle presents as unrest and one full of troubles and turmoil. The scene, however, above all mirrors the personal relationship between King Henry and his oldest son. Despite all the Prince's deeds, King Henry never understood his son, always being suspicious of him and making hasty assumptions regarding his moral qualities. Harry's responsibility and good intentions, already revealed in the course of *1 Henry IV*, had always been neglected by King Henry; nor did his competent leadership at the Battle of Shrewsbury change the King's opinion of his son. Emrys Jones notes that the timing of the Prince's first entry, when the King is already sleeping, and exit, when he is not awake yet, re-enacts the course of the entire plot with these two characters, since King Henry and Prince Harry, "so to speak, kept on missing each other all their lives".[116] The King's sleep, which once more complicates their last meeting, shows how difficult their entire relationship has been. Only after his last awakening, Henry symbolically stops being deaf to his heir's words. The sleeping figure on the stage creates a space for recapitulation before the final act of the play, which is not, however, a horrible murder or a grand battle, but the completion of the change of a prodigal prince into a much beloved king.

Some of these functions, as we will see, are also recognisable in the sleeping scenes of Shakespeare's later tragedy, *King Lear*. At the end of Act 3 of the play, the audience witness Lear at the peak of an emotional and mental crisis. Having divided his kingdom between his two older daughters and rejected the youngest (and only truly loving) child, the King himself now faces banishment from Goneril and Regan's castles and is forced to spend a stormy night outside. Fighting a battle against his disillusionment and rage in defence of his very sanity, Lear finally finds shelter in a nearby cattle shed, where (in the Q version only) he decides to conduct a desperate mock trial of the absent Goneril and Regan, wishing that they were dissected so that he could see if there is "any cause in nature that makes this hardness" (sc. 13 [= 3. 6], l. 67).[117] At this point, the physically exhausted and emotionally overcharged king falls asleep.

[116] Emrys Jones 38.
[117] All references are going to be to the Q version of the play (*The History of King Lear*, 1608).

Before Lear's sleeping figure is carried off stage, the Earl of Kent (in the Quarto version only) surveys him briefly and comments upon his wretched state, lamenting about the king's "Oppressèd nature" (l. 86) and expressing hope in the restorative power of sleep:

> [*Kent.*] This rest might yet have balmed thy broken sinews
> Which, if convenience will not allow,
> Stand in hard cure.
> (sc. 13, ll. 87–89)

As Noll observes, Shakespearian characters – such as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* or Alonso in *The Tempest* – in situations of exceptional emotional tension, indeed tend to "revert to a temporal oblivion in sleep, which functions as a kind of self-protection of the soul against emotional overloading and the mental illness resulting therefrom". [118] All prospects for Lear's cure are, however, ruined in the following scene, which completes the first movement of the play with the brutal blinding of the Earl of Gloucester by Lear's power-hungry daughters for his loyalty to their father. At this point, too many conflicts still remain unresolved, making Lear's recovery dramatically impossible.

Only Cordelia's readiness to forgive her father and "[redeem] nature from the general curse / Which twain [*i.e.*, Goneril and Regan] have brought her to" (sc. 20 [= 4. 5], ll. 196f) paves the way for redemption. For this dramatic purpose, Shakespeare introduces the character of a doctor (whose lines are assigned to an unnamed gentleman in the Folio version), who gives Cordelia herbs to induce in Lear a restorative sleep, which he calls "Our foster-nurse of nature" (sc. 18 [= 4. 3], l. 13). When Lear's sleeping body, dressed in a royal robe, is carried on the stage, Cordelia affectionately kisses the old man's lips and surveys his face, describing his past suffering with a great amount of daughterly love, for a (supposed) lack of which Lear originally disinherited her. Lear awakes a new man, as the doctor expertly testifies (sc. 21 [= 4. 6], ll. 76f), ready to embrace his lost daughter and beg her for forgiveness. With Lear's relationship with Cordelia finally purified and his reason restored, the opportunity ensues to purify the entire country in the final act of the play.

As we have seen in *2 Henry IV*, the spectacle of the final sleeping scene in *King Lear* again creates space for the culmination of the main plot and its recapitulation before the play's finale. Cordelia's words of love from the first scene of the play, which remained misunderstood then, now gain a clear meaning, while Lear, who foolishly spurned his daughter, had first to lose his senses in order to stop being a fool. The dramatic situation is,

[118] Noll 72: "In Situationen außergewöhnlicher emotionaler Anspannung wenden sich die Figuren Shakespeares gern dem zeitweiligen Vergessen im Schlaf zu, das als eine Art Selbstschutz der Seele von emotionaler Überlastung und daraus resultierender Geisteskranheit funktioniert."

however, also very interesting from the thematic point of view. Although, as Stanley Wells has asserted, Shakespeare was "clearly anxious not to place the action [of *King Lear*] within a specific philosophical or religious context", [119] and although, by means of the character of the doctor, the beneficial powers of sleep are explained within a strictly natural framework, the use of the sleeping motif in the play clearly resonates with the Christian idea of spiritual regeneration through sleep and the sleeper's arousal to a new life.

The metaphysical overtones of the scene become more evident when compared to Robert Greene's dramatisation of a verse romance, *Orlando Furioso* (late 1580s). The play contains a similar situation to *King Lear*, placed roughly in the same point of the plot development,[120] and which, too, is set in a non-Christian world. At the beginning of the play, Angellica, daughter to the Emperor of Africa, chooses of all her noble suitors Orlando, nephew to Charlemagne, who by marrying her should become the new Emperor. The Machiavellian character Sacripant, however, wants the crown for himself. Having been flatly rejected by Angellica, he by a trick persuades Orlando that Angellica has been unfaithful to him, the accusation resulting in Angellica's banishment from the empire by her father (who then helps the Twelve Peers of France find her to avenge Orlando) and Orlando's madness. At the end of Act 4, the fairy Melissa gives Orlando a glass of wine, charms him with her wand to sleep and pronounces the invocation:

*Melissa. O vos Siluani, Satyri, Faunique, Deaeque,*
*Nymphae Hamadriades, Driades, Parcaeque potentes*
*O vos qui colitis lacusque locusque profundos,*
*Infernasque domus et nigra palatia Ditis!*
*Tuque Demogorgon, qui noctis fata gubernas,*
*Qui regis infernum solium, coelumque, solumque!*
*Exaudite preces, filiasque auferte micantes;*
*In caput Orlandi coelestes spargite lymphas,*
*Spargite, quis misere reuocetur rapta per umbras*
*Orlandi infelix anima.*
(4.2.1160–69)[121]

(Oh you gods of woods, satyrs, fauns, goddesses, hamadryads, dryads and mighty fates, you who inhabit lakes and places deep, houses of the underworld and Pluto's dark palaces! And you, Demogorgon, who govern the fate of the night, who rule the underworld see, heaven and the earth! Hear the prayers and remove the glittering daughters; pour celestial waters on Orlando's head, whereby Orlando's soul, sadly snatched away through the shadows, may be recalled.)

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[119] Stanley Wells, "Shakespeare: Man of the European Renaissance", 9th World Shakespeare Congress, Charles University in Prague, 18 Jul 2011.

[120] The anonymous *King Leir* does not contain the sleeping scene at all: in the equivalent scene 14 of the pre-Shakespearian version, Cordella saves the starving Leir and his counsellor Perillus by offering them food. Greene's play is, in this respect, closer to Shakespeare's *King Lear* than the anonymous play.

[121] Robert Greene, *Orlando Furioso*, in *The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene*, Vol. 1, ed. J. Churton Collins (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1905) 221–65. (Original italics.)

Consequently, Orlando regains his senses and from Melissa's account learns the truth about Sacripant's machinations. In the final act of the play, he slays Sacripant, saves Angellica from execution, and is crowned the emperor.

The difference between the two treatments of sleep is a radical one. In Greene, sleep itself is of no real power, but serves as a mere dramatic occasion, the actual source of the sleeper's regeneration being witchcraft, pagan gods and mythological creatures. A similar approach to sleeping can be found in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was written within no more than a few years of Greene's play (for the discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Chapter 4 of this study). In *King Lear*, on the other hand, sleep itself is presented as the agent of redemption, which was an idea more compatible with the tenets of Shakespeare's time. It comes not from the hands of a random fairy-tale-like creature, but from the sleeper's loving daughter, against whom he has originally sinned and who is willing to forgive her erring father, even to risk her life and wage war for his sake, stressing that "No blown ambition doth our arms incite, / But love, dear love, and our aged father's right" (sc. 18 [= 4. 3], ll. 28f).

It is also dramatically significant that, unlike the first time that the audience see the King sleeping on the stage, the second sleeping scene is accompanied by music (explicitly in the Q version only), which, as Catherine M. Dunn points out, was in the Renaissance widely believed to have restorative powers similar to sleep[122] and which, especially in Shakespeare's later drama, gained a special symbolical, as well as metaphysical, meaning: as Dunn observes, "the final transformation and reconciliation of the characters is frequently effected by music, just as it is usually paralleled or symbolized by changes in the physical universe and in the accompanying music".[123] Since the extraordinary powers of music were usually explained within the biblical framework,[124] the spiritual element of the situation in *King Lear* is further foregrounded.

In spite of the fact that, as we have already mentioned, no Christian concept is explicitly named in the play, the underlying link between sleep, spiritual rebirth, and regeneration of penance, all of which Shakespeare's sleeping scene addresses, was a

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[122] See Catherine M. Dunn, "The Function of Music in Shakespeare's Romances", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 20 (1969): 391–405 at 392–93. Cf. David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006), esp. chapter "Musical Theory", pp. 13–49.

[123] Dunn 394. Dunn, however, does not discuss the function of music in *King Lear*.

[124] See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Vol. 2, ed. Nicolas K. Kiessling, Thomas C. Faulkner and Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990) 112–16 = 2. 2. 6. 3 ("Musicke a Remedy").

common topos in mediaeval liturgical drama, drawing from biblical material, especially neo-testamental models.[125]

## 2. 5 Falstaff: Less Independent, More Stock Character

Whereas there are numerous of examples of a dramatic use of sleep in Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, the comedic portion of his canon exploits the motif of a sleeper only sporadically. This can best be explained by the different demands of genre. As Northrop Frye argues, Shakespearian comedy is a less realistic form of drama than tragedy or history, with a strongly conventionalised narrative, more distant from the audience's real-life experience. The cast of the play is accordingly conformed to the stylised context, and although Frye admits that "lifelike and highly individualized characters may appear",[126] the majority of them are qualitatively different than those of tragic or history plays.[127] With these differences, we can logically expect a different kind of involvement on the part of the audience and, more importantly, different dramatic techniques to induce it. The employment of awe, extreme dramatic suspense or characters having to deal with a heavy emotional and moral burden – which are all tropes crucial for shaping the atmosphere of a tragedy and which, as we have explained, usually accompany an image of a sleeper on the stage – is not a device particularly suitable for the design of a comedic plot or for the delineation of its characters. Yet there are a few notable instances in Shakespeare's comedies when the motif of sleep does occur and its dramatic function affects both the image of the sleeping character and the overall plot.

Besides the already mentioned sleeping scene in *Cymbeline*, a play which, however, in many respects resembles a tragedy (the only reason why the Posthumus-Giacomo-Innogen subplot does not end in a disaster is Pisanio's refusal to obey his master's orders to kill Innogen), the major example of a comedic sleeper of the Shakespeare canon is undoubtedly Sir John Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*. Although *Henry IV* is, strictly speaking, not a comedy either, it is the only historical play by Shakespeare which is, especially in its first part, pointing towards one. Its hybrid structure itself is unique among Shakespeare histories: it intertwines a historical plot, covering the highest social space inhabited by the English, Scottish and Welsh nobility, with a fictitious one, depicting the plebeian London

[125] See Bevington, esp. pp. 53–59.
[126] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1965) 13.
[127] See chapter "Mouldy Tales" in Frye, pp. 4–33.

full of drunkards, thieves, thief-catchers, sheriffs, travellers, waiters and carriers, most of which have no historical prototype.[128] Prince Harry balances between these two worlds as the main point of intersection.

Whereas the first plot is naturally dominated by the King, Prince Harry's father, who has to face challenges to his claim to the throne in order, eventually, to hand the country to his son, the emblematic father figure to the Prince in the second plane of the play is Sir John Falstaff, both Harry's mentor and seducer, for whom knightly honour is just a "word", "air", "a mere scutcheon" (*1 Henry IV*, 5. 1. 133, 134 and 138) and who leads the young Prince down the path of vice. The banishment of the jovial, life-loving Falstaff by the newly crowned King Henry V at the end of *2 Henry IV* (see Chapter 2. 7 of the present study) led most of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Shakespeare commentators to see the Prince as an unscrupulous, Machiavellian ruler. In his lengthy analysis of Falstaff's character, published in 1914, Elmer Edgar Stoll was perhaps the first one to dissent from the sentimentalised view of Falstaff, and, by tracing the knight's roots back to the *miles gloriosus* of Roman comedy or the Vice of mediaeval moralities, he concluded that an Elizabethan audience would have deemed Falstaff's character and actions as cowardly, dishonest and damnable.[129] A few years later, Albert H. Tolman maintained that "Shakespeare has gradually made clear to us the evil influence of this 'white-bearded Satan,' and the necessity that the King shall break away from him", stressing that Falstaff's main rôle in the plays was rather a "structural necessity" than that of a true, independent character.[130]

Little attention, however, has so far been paid to Falstaff's sleeping habits, which seem to play an important part in Falstaff's delineation, clearly showing that the debauched knight was created as a conglomerate of popular early modern stereotypes. The audience's first encounter with the figure in Act 1, Scene 2 of *1 Henry IV* is indicative of what spectators can expect of the character. At the very beginning of the scene, Falstaff asks the Henry, Prince of Wales, what time of day it is. The question, which might seem rather trivial, is very much symptomatic of Falstaff's character and opens a door for his thorough introduction:

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[128] Although Shakespeare had employed the plebeian element both before the *Henry IV* duology, in Jack Cade scenes of *2 Henry VI*, and after it, in the army scenes in *Henry V*, the two parts of *Henry IV* remain the only Shakespearian histories attempting to describe the life of the low class in some complexity.

[129] See Elmer Edgar Stoll, "Falstaff", *Modern Philology* 12 (1914): 197–240.

[130] Albert H. Tolman, "Why Did Shakespeare Create Falstaff?", *PMLA* 34 (1919): 1–13 at 13. For various treatments of Falstaff's character from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century, see the collection Harold Bloom, ed., *Sir John Falstaff* (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House, 2004).

*Prince Harry*. Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack, and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping-houses, and the blessed sun himself a fair hot wench in flame-coloured taffeta, I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day.
*Falstaff*. Indeed you come near me now[.]

(1. 2. 2–11)

From the Prince's description (against which Falstaff himself does not in any way protest), we learn that Sir John is, above all, a materialist, who prioritises his appetite for wine and good food over all other aspects of life. Falstaff's gluttony is dramatically introduced by means of the motif of sleep, which, according to early modern beliefs, was a companion of excessive eating and drinking. "Great Eaters are usually great Sleepers," asserts Joseph Eyres, explaining that "[f]rom an over full stomach ascend obnubilating fumes which oppress the brain, and lock up the passages of the spirits, and thereby dispose to sleep".[131] As Bevington stresses, Falstaff's entrée to the play is usually interpreted and produced as one of a sleeping character, his initial question marking a moment of awakening.[132] By means of this introduction, the audience are given a chance to get to know the old, decadent knight even before he pronounces a single word. The image of a fat, no doubt also snoring, yawning and stretching figure on the stage makes a strong impression by itself.

Shortly after Falstaff's awakening, Prince Hal underlines the initial effect by insisting that it is because of his "sleeping upon benches after noon" that Falstaff has totally forgotten what is important for him and what is not. Such a statement had special significance for early modern theatregoers, since contemporary medicine was very rigorous as to the time allotted for sleeping, which is exactly what the Prince seems to be referring to. We have already mentioned that Robert Burton warned against the harm of sleep if it was "in extreames, or unseasonably used". The Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (1505–1568), in his popular medical handbook, *The Touchstone of Complexions* (1561, trans. 1576), elaborates on the same idea, claiming that

euen as Sleepe vnseasonablye or vnmesurably taken either by day or night maketh men dull, obliuious, lazye, faint, heauy, blockishe, and marreth both wit and memory: so agayne, watching being not within medtocrytie and measure vsed, dryeth the brayne, affecteth the senses, empayreth memory, dymmeth eyesighte, marreth the Spirites, wasteth naturall humour, hyndereth concoction, and finallye consumeth all the grace, beauty, comelynes and state of the whole body.[133]

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[131] Joseph Eyres, *The Church-Sleeper Awakened* (London: W. Godbid for Joseph Cranford, 1659) 57.
[132] See Bevington 68.
[133] Levinus Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1576) fol. 58$^{v}$. (Contractions expanded.)

Humanistic writers on sleep were even stricter about sleeping at noon, which seems to be Falstaff's favourite activity. William Bullein makes it clear that sleeping in the daytime is unnatural, even harmful to men, since

> it bringeth many sicknesses, & geueth place to the pestilence, and abateth memorye. For as the marigold is spred by the daye, and closed by the nighte: euen so is man of nature disposed, although through custom otherwyse altered vnto great domage and hurte of body.[134]

Similar warnings can be found in dietaries by William Vaughan, André du Laurens or Ambroise Paré. Indeed, the concept of a noon sleeper seems to have been so common in the early modern period that it found its way to the realm of literature, where it transformed into a source of ridicule and stock humour. When, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock characterises his servant Lancelot, who is clearly a conventional clown with a very limited delineation, he admits that "the patch is kind enough", but also a "huge feeder, / Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day / More than the wildcat" (2. 5. 44–46). With a large amount of irony, Thomas Dekker, in the already mentioned *The Gull's Hornbook*, praises the benefits of the noon sleep, playing, in a truly Falstaffian manner, upon stereotypes well known to Elizabethan readers:

> At what time do lords and ladies use to rise, but then? Your simpering merchants' wives are the fairest liers in the world; and is not eleven o'clock their common hour? They find, no doubt, unspeakable sweetness in such lying; else they would not day by day put it so in practice. In a word, midday slumbers are golden: they make the body fat, the skin fair, the flesh plump delicate and tender: they set a russet colour on the cheeks of young women, and make lusty courage to rise up in men: they make us thrifty; both in sparing victuals, for breakfasts thereby are saved from the hellmouth of the belly; and in preserving apparel, for while we warm us in our beds our clothes are not worn.[135]

Not to mention that excessive sleeping was considered a link to immoral behaviour, since "to sleep overmuch, especially on a soft bed, makes folkes the more inclined to Lust",[136] which, particularly in *2 Henry IV*, is an apparent feature of Sir John's character.

As we can see, Shakespeare's connecting Falstaff with certain sleep habits most probably evoked in the original audiences a particular set of conventions, stereotypes and expectations, within the framework of which they perceived and understood Sir John as a dramatic type. As the story of the plays unfolds, this preconceived image is not relativised, subverted or overcome in any way, but only supported with further evidence. When, after the Gadshill robbery, a sheriff comes to arrest "A gross, fat man" (2. 5. 466), Falstaff

[134] William Bullein, *A Newe Booke Entituled the Gouernement of Healthe* (London: John Day, 1558) fol. cxxiii$^{r}$. (Contraction expanded.)

[135] Decker 62.

[136] James Ferrand, *Erotomania* (Oxford: L. Lichfield for Edward Forrest, 1640) 58.

hides, while the Prince sends the officer away on a false trail. Upon this, Harry summons Falstaff again, only to learn that he is behind the arras, “Fast asleep […] and snorting like a horse” (ll. 482f). Besides the obvious humorous aspect of the situation, an element is also present of critique of Falstaff’s social behaviour. A parallel to Sir John can be found in an older Elizabethan morality by Ulpian Fulwell (1545–1584), entitled *Like Will to Like* (1568), which contains a scene with the stereotypical German Hans, who, drunk, enters the scene, sings, falls on the floor, rises and, finally, “sitteth in the chair, and snoreth as though he were fast a sleep”.[137] Bevington sees in similar scenes “the kind of spiritual sluggishness”,[138] which continues the tradition of mediaeval religious plays.

Falstaff’s sleep behind the arras also offers the audience once more an undistorted image of the old knight. When awake, Falstaff does his best to cover his true nature by the air of the likeable “sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff” (*1 Henry IV*, 2. 5. 433f), one of the “minions of the moon” and “men of good government” (1. 2. 23f). Asleep, however, although hidden from the dangers of the outside world, he is in fact deprived of any means of protecting his honour and becomes fully exposed. In a way, Falstaff’s sleeping scene proleptically parodies the sleeping scenes of *Othello* and *Cymbeline*. When Peto searches Sir John’s pockets and finds a bill for an enormous amount of drink and good food but little bread, Falstaff’s true nature of a gluttonous drunkard becomes so apparent that even the Prince of Wales is shocked by what he sees. According to Eyres, heavy drinking and excess were often accompanied, besides other vices, by “dullness in duty”,[139] which is very true of Falstaff, who goes into battles with a bottle for a pistol and rather than fighting for his King feigns his own death.

As we have already stated, Falstaff’s character is, above all, based on early modern negative social stereotypes. Furthermore, as Stoll stresses, as a character he undergoes little or no development and his image remains static for the entire historical duology.[140] Since sleeping was a widely discussed phenomenon in the Elizabethan cultural milieu and had been a popular characteristic device in the theatrical tradition, Shakespeare used it as an easy and straightforward vehicle to keep the audience reminded that at the centre of the

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[137] Ulpian Fulwel, *A Pleasant Enterlude, Intituled, Like Will to Like* (London: Edward Allde, 1568) sig. E2$^{r}$, ll. 30–31.

[138] Bevington 62. Walter Benjamin, in his study of Baroque drama, considers the concept of the corruptive “dullness of the heart”, *acedia*, or sloth, as one of the key aspects of the delineation of tragic characters. Traceable back to Thomas Aquinas, *acedia* was mainly associated with melancholy men. Benjamin quotes German author Aegidius Albertinus (1560–1620), according to whom a person suffering from *acedia* “is immediately assailed by horrible dreams, he is terrified in his sleep”. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998) 155–57.

[139] Eyres 58.

[140] See Stoll 202.

story sits the complex character of Prince Harry and his reform from a wild rebel into a competent ruler, whereas the debauched knight's rôle is predominantly instrumental, as Tolman stressed, and he should not win much of the spectators' favour.

## 2. 6 The Dream-Frame of *The Taming of a/the Shrew*

A unique example of a Shakespearian comical sleeper is to be found in his early comedy *The Taming of the Shrew*. The play consists of three plot strands, one of which covers the framing action of the play, containing the sleeping character of Christopher Sly, whereas the remaining two form the main narrative of the play – that is, the taming of Kate and wooing of her sister. Leaving aside for a moment the textual problem springing from the existence of two different versions of the story, let us look at the fullest version of the enveloping plot, recorded by the anonymous 1594 quarto entitled *The Taming of a Shrew*, and try and determine its function within the overall structure of the play, with a special attention paid to the aforementioned Sly.

At the beginning of the play, a tapster thrusts Sly out of his tavern, telling him that he will not let him sleep inside. The drunken Sly subsequently falls asleep in a gutter. When a lord and his entourage, returning from the hunt, spot the sleeping man, the lord devises a practical joke to be played upon him, commanding his companions to carry Sly to his house, dress him in fine garments and treat him as a nobleman, whilst he himself will pretend to be his servant. In the lord's house, actors arrive and promise to stage a comedy entitled "The Taming of a Shrew". The lord asks them to get ready and wakes Sly, convincing him that he is a rich nobleman with a lovely wife, who long mourned his absence. A boy enters dressed as a lady and Sly hopes to go to bed with him soon, but the lord announces the play. Sly is glad when he learns there is a fool in it.

From his chair, Sly watches a story of the three daughters of an Athenian merchant named Alfonso and their three suitors. In order to be allowed to woo Phylema and Emelia, Aurelius, son to the Duke of Sestos, and Polidor, a student in Athens, first have to find a husband for their older shrewish sister, Kate. Luckily, Ferando arrives, whom Alfonso previously promised six thousand crowns if he ever wins his oldest daughter. Despite Kate's fierce protests (but with her secret content), Ferando marries Kate and takes her to his country house to tame her. In the meanwhile, both Aurelius (disguised as a merchant's son) and Polidor manage to win Phylema and Emelia's hearts. When Ferando and Kate

attend Kate's sisters' weddings, Ferando manages to present Kate as an obedient wife whereas Phylema and Emelia prove to be more shrewish than their older sister.

The play proper is several times interrupted by Sly, whose behaviour is demonstratively inappropriate for his newly-gained status. He shows little understanding of drama and blurs the play with reality. Towards the end of the production, he finally falls asleep, only to be subsequently brought in his old clothes back to the gutter in front of the tavern. There he finally wakes up, meets the tapster and tells him about "the best dream / That ever [he] had in [his] life" (sc. 15, ll. 18f),[141] upon which he decides to go home and put his "dream" into practice by taming his own wife.

As Richard Hosley observed, the enveloping action was nothing uncommon in Elizabethan drama.[142] In Shakespeare's dramatic canon, however, the framing portion of a play never goes beyond the standard choric prologue and epilogue, sometimes altered by the use of allegorical figures (such as Fame in *2 Henry IV* or Time in *The Winter's Tale*) or the pantomime (*Pericles*). The closest parallel – in terms of content, not form – to Sly's subplot can be found in the transformation of Nick Bottom from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into an ass and back, with a brief affair with Titania in the meantime. When, in Act 4, Scene 1, he finally wakes up in his human form, Bottom says he had a dream "past the wit of man to say what dream it was" (ll. 200f) and decides to ask his fellow Peter Quince to write a ballad about it. David G. Hale sees a direct parallel between Bottom's oneiric experience and Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*, especially in Bottom's summary of his experience and his resolution to have a poem written about it.[143] If we generalise Hale's observation from one particular work by Chaucer to mediaeval dream poetry as a genre and apply it on *The Taming of a Shrew*, we can discern a clear influence of mediaeval poetic techniques (which, as we demonstrated in Chapter 1, were still current in the early modern period) upon the frame plot, and consequently upon the entire structure of the play.

With the setting of the play proper in Greek Athens, *A Shrew* creates a sharp contrast between the contemporary England of the induction and the classical, temporally undefined locale of the contained story. This gives an impression similar to "an ideal and often symbolic landscape"[144] in dream-poems, as defined by A. C. Spearing – not in terms of the scene's unrealistic nature, but in the sense of its detachment from Elizabethans' everyday experience. As we have observed, one of the commonplaces of dream poetry is

[141] *The Taming of a Shrew: The 1594 Quarto*, ed. Stephen Roy Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).
[142] See Richard Hosley, "Was There a 'Dramatic Epilogue' to *The Taming of the Shrew*?", *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 1 (1961): 17–34.
[143] See David G. Hale, "Bottom's Dream and Chaucer", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36 (1985): 219–20.
[144] Spearing 4.

also the dreamer's encounter with "an authoritative figure, from whom he learns some religious or secular doctrine".[145] The dream portion of the poem thus becomes a space for the contemplation of subjects and principles which, in the way they are presented, often defy ordinaries of waking life so much that only the dream framing can lend them credibility and, subsequently, place them in the waking reality. The anonymous author of *A Shrew* exploits this convention and puts it to a new use: his play within the play does not really discuss elevated doctrines which would call for an allegorical dream-world, but the most ordinary, down-to-earth issue of taming a termagant wife (a mock-variation upon the classical and mediaeval *ars amoris*, which was often the subject of this genre of poetry), presented by the "authoritative figure" of Ferando.

The greatest subversion of mediaeval poetic tradition, however, is the character of the dreamer himself. The ostentatiously humble, yet learned and intelligent, courtly poet is replaced by a clown who can scarcely apprehend (let alone comprehend) the contents of his own "dream". From the very first exchange between Sly and the tapster, the audience learn that Sly is a "whoreson drunken slave" (sc. 1, l. 1). When the lord and his men see him sleeping on the street, unsure whether he is dead or alive, one of the servingmen claims that "'tis nothing but a drunken sleep. / His head is too heavy for his body, / And he hath drunk so much that he can go no funder" (ll. 19–21), upon which the nobleman remarks that "the slavish villain stinks of drink" (l. 22). Although, in terms of the actual space which he is given in the play, Sly's rôle is a minor one, these several lines delineate his character sufficiently to present him as a stock type, in a way not far from the already discussed Falstaff. His presence on the stage and his inappropriate comments upon the play proper were, above all, a form of comic relief and it is very probable that the spectators welcomed Sly in a similar fashion as he welcomed the fool in the play produced in the lord's house. When he ultimately wakes up in front of the tavern, instead of commenting upon the dream or at least attempting to pinpoint its moral, he gives the audience a prospect of yet another comical situation when he announces that he will go home and tame his own wife if she is angry at him (which, given the fact that it is already morning and he is still drunk, is very likely).

Our expectations of the relationship between the frame and its contents are severely undercut: as Leah Marcus notes, the dramatic epilogue of *A Shrew*, as it is constructed, relativises the impression of the play proper, turning it into a mere "wish-fulfillment

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[145] Ibid.

fantasy of a habitual drunkard”.[146] Rather than turning the audience’s attention to the content of the “dream” and establishing its link with the real life, Sly’s ending dismisses its probability outside the dream (or, in this case, dramatic) world and demonstratively converts it into a farce opposing everyday reality. Although we have observed that an incompetent narrator is a frequent device in secular mediaeval dream-visions, lacunas in the Dreamer’s life-experience or learning typically establish the complexity of the story-content rather than devaluating it. The character of the Dreamer here is not a medium inviting the audience to experience the essence of his vision with him (let alone observe his “psychological journey”, as Kathryn Lynch words it), but the dream’s sole recipient, who, by discrediting it, prevents it from being further shared. In this respect, the structure of *A Shrew* might be interpreted as a form of parody of the high poetical genre, which intentionally makes use of its established techniques in order to achieve precisely the opposite effect from its model, vulgarizing its form at the same time.[147]

The question is, to what degree these observations are applicable to the Shakespeare version of the story, *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was first printed posthumously as part of the First Folio in 1623. Like *A Shrew*, Shakespeare’s text begins with the Sly induction, which is very similar to that of the anonymous version. A drunkard is thrust out of an alehouse by a hostess, falls asleep, and is found by a lord and his men returning from a hunt. The lord, who calls the sleeping Sly a “monstrous beast” and compares him to a “swine” (Induction 1, l. 30), orders that he be carried into his house and dressed and treated as an aristocrat. The actors arrive and the lord asks them to perform a play in honour of an eccentric lord staying in his house that night (that is, Christopher Sly). Then the lord instructs his page to dress like a woman and act as Sly’s wife.

In the second scene of the induction, the lord’s servants, upon Sly’s awakening, persuade the tinker that he is a lord, who has been “fifteen years […] in a dream” (l. 77). The real lord’s page arrives, pretending he is Sly’s lady wife, but refuses to go to bed with him because of the “peril to incur [his] former malady” (l. 118). Sly is not pleased, but since he “would be loath to fall into [his] dreams again” (ll. 121f), he agrees to watch a

[146] Leah Marcus, “The Shakespearean Editor as Shrew-Tamer”, *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 177–200 at 178.

[147] M. C. Bradbrook suggests that variations upon the mediaeval framework vision narratives were quite common in popular Elizabethan drama, mentioning several examples. See M. C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy*, 2nd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973) 82.

play instead.[148] After the first scene of the piece, however, Sly seems to be bored and falling asleep. When one of the servants and Sly's "wife" accuse him of not paying attention, he remarks that "'Tis a very excellent piece of work, madam Lady. Would 'twere done" (1. 1. 246f). After this, the play's focus shifts to the contained story and the audience do not hear of Sly again – no explanation (nor even a stage direction) marks his exit.

The sense of an abrupt ending of the framing material, especially in the light of the anonymous Quarto version, bothered literary historians from the early stages of Shakespeare textual studies. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Alexander Pope published a conflated version of *The Shrew*, augmenting the Sly subplot with the insertions from *A Shrew*.[149] This practice, although not accepted by modern editors of Shakespeare's works, is still occasionally favoured by theatre directors, to whom the incomplete subplot poses a crucial dramaturgical challenge.[150] Whereas a general agreement exists that the key to the interpretation of the Shakespeare version of the enveloping action of *The Shrew* lies in the text's relation to *A Shrew*, there is no universally accepted explanation as to the nature of this relationship. Since Pope's edition, three principal theories have been suggested: 1) *A Shrew* is the prototext of *The Shrew*; 2) *The Shrew* is the prototext of *A Shrew*, which is either a "bad quarto" or a deliberate revision of the Shakespeare play; 3) both *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* derive independently from a lost prototext (both therefore being metatexts), either Shakespearian or not (the "*Ur-Shrew* theory").[151]

As Marcus and Stephen Roy Miller note, the current orthodoxy seems to incline strongly to the second of the theories, sometimes partly drawing upon the third theory in postulating the existence of an earlier Shakespearian version of *The Shrew*, containing the full Sly framework and, in the wooing subplot, more closely resembling *A Shrew*.[152] The proponents of the "bad quarto" or "later revision" theory tend to accept the Folio version of the play as it is, with the unfinished Sly subplot, as canonical on the basis of two observations, namely 1) the supposedly derivative nature of the Quarto version and 2) the proclaimed dramaturgical superiority of the taming story concluding in "reality", but having the dramatic support of the induction. This would mean that Shakespeare did not

[148] The name of the play within the play is not mentioned in the Shakespeare text: the lord's page just explains to Sly that it is "a kind of history" (Induction 1, 135). Although "history" was a common early modern term for any story, it might be worth noting that the title-page of the 1594 quarto announced the anonymous version as *A pleasant conceited historie, called The taming of a shrew*.

[149] William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, Vol. 2, ed. Alexander Pope (London: Jacob Tonson, 1723).

[150] See Stephen Roy Miller, Introduction, *The Taming of a Shrew*, 40–55.

[151] See Lukeš 52–53, Marcus 178–181 or Miller 1–12.

[152] See Marcus 180 and Miller 5.

intend to present Sly's story in a dream-frame fashion (at least in the final revision of his play, if we decide to accept the hypothesis of an earlier Shakespearian version) and the full version of his subplot either marks an early, subsequently rejected stage of the genesis of text or the later compiler's interpolation. Upon a closer examination, however, we realise that the arguments supporting these hypotheses are, despite their inner logic, essentially invalid.

The first observation concerning the derivative nature of *A Shrew* is based on several instances of verbal parallels between *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* (*A Shrew* is about 1,500 lines long, while the length of *The Shrew* is 2,641 lines, of which about 250 lines are similar to *A Shrew*, with only a few being almost identical), when *The Shrew* preserves a good text, whereas *A Shrew* contains seemingly corrupted echoes "that make sense only if ones knows the F version from which they must have been derived".[153] The conclusion of this comparison would be that "the play [*i.e.*, *A Shrew*] must be a reconstruction, from memory, of another that we know in the form in which it appears in the First Folio as *The Taming of the Shrew*".[154] Such an assumption, however, can only be explained by a rather naïve understanding of Elizabethan theatre and publication practices, since it presumes that if Shakespeare had revised *A Shrew*, he would have had used the print as a source text.

The title-page of Q1 of *A Shrew* – and both of its subsequent reprints of 1596 and 1607 – links the text to the Earl of Pembroke theatre company, about which we have little information. By August 1593, the troupe had gone bankrupt and the former shareholders were forced to sell the company's property, including its dramatic repertoire. At the end of the sixteenth century, acting companies kept their texts in the form of official play-text manuscripts with the licence of the Master of the Revels. These "bookes", as they were called (today the terms "playbooks" or "promptbooks" are most frequently used), were transcribed from a playwright's rough draft of the work and subsequently used as master copies for all individual actors' parts, as well as later transcripts and adaptations of the piece for tours and special occasions, which more or less varied from the original. Whereas the official books did not usually leave the theatre, the acting transcripts (like any authorial drafts preceding the fair copy) were of lesser importance and were more likely to "leak" to the printer.[155] On the other hand, if the company, for whatever reason, decided to sell their

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[153] H. J. Oliver, Introduction, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1982) 1–75 at 19.

[154] Oliver 22.

[155] For a more detailed discussion of textual and printing practice in early-modern English drama, see Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), esp. chapter "From Stage to Printing House", pp. 137–58.

play to another troupe, it is hardly conceivable it would be in any other form than the official text with the Master of the Revels' signature, allowing the owner of the play to produce it.

The 1594 edition of *A Shrew*, duly registered on May 2, 1594 by Peter Short, and the performance of the play on June 11 of the same year by the joint Lord Admiral's and Lord Chamberlain's Men at Newington Butts,[156] testify to the concurrent existence of at least two copies of the text. These, however, did not necessarily have to be identical. On the basis of the analysis of the stage directions of the print of *A Shrew*, which are of a relatively greater number, more specific and more precise than in the Folio version of *The Shrew*, Lukeš concludes that the Quarto version represents a production text, which could have been adapted and reduced from a broader textual base.[157] It is reasonably safe to assume that the "broader textual base" about which Lukeš talks was nothing else but the promptbook of the play, at the time of the publication of the Quarto already in the possession of Shakespeare's company, whereas the copy which found its way into print was perhaps a shortened adaptation for Pembroke's Men's 1592 or 1593 tour.[158] Any verbal similarities between *A Shrew*, as we know it from the printed text, and *The Shrew*, which led Oliver to claim that one text "must" be indebted to the other, could therefore be very well explained by the logical assumption that they both derive from the same source: the full version of *The Taming of a Shrew* which (like the promptbook of *The Taming of the Shrew*) does not survive today. The fact that the Quarto text is corrupted and garbled and some of the original passages might be inaccurately recorded (although Marcus advocates some of the variant readings, claiming that they would make perfect sense if they were allowed to stay on their own), is an entirely different issue. If we accept this conclusion, the strongest argument for *The Shrew*'s chronological primacy over *A Shrew* disappears and we have to search for additional evidence which might solve the problem.

In the early modern editions of *A Shrew*, we find an interesting fact which might be indicative of the relationship between the play and the Shakespeare text or, at least, of how this relationship was understood in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As it has already been mentioned, all three quartos include the name of the Earl of Pembroke's company on their title-pages as the principal attraction for the reading audience. None, however, makes any mention of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, King's Men or William

[156] See Philip Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary*, Vol. 2, ed. Walter W. Greg (London: A. H. Bullen, 1908) 164–65.

[157] See Lukeš 54.

[158] See David George, "Shakespeare and Pembroke's Men", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32 (1981): 305–23 at 306.

Shakespeare, who, by the 1607 publication of the third quarto of *A Shrew*, had been an established playwright, whose name had regularly appeared on printed editions of his works (both *King Lear* and *Pericles* quartos, printed in 1608 and 1609 respectively, include Shakespeare's name on the title-pages, not to mention Thomas Thorpe's 1609 edition of "Shake-speares sonnets", proving that Shakespeare's authorship was a selling point at the time). In contrast, the 1594 quarto of *Titus Andronicus*, another play which the Chamberlain's Men probably got from Pembroke's company, announces the piece as *The most lamentable Romaine tragedie of Titus Andronicus, As it was plaide by the right honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earl of Pembrooke, and Earl of Sussex their seruants*. Six years later, the second quarto attaches to the title of the play an updated list of the text's past and present owners, including "the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembrooke, the Earle of Darbie, the Earle of Sussex, and the Lorde Chamberlaine theyr Seruants". The third quarto of 1611 reduces the list and only attributes the play to "the Kings Maiesties Seruants". The publisher obviously wanted to raise the level of attractiveness of his product by advertising the most up-to-date information of the producers of the play, who were at the time one of the most popular theatre companies in London. If *A Shrew* really was a later compiler's ploy banking on the popularity of Shakespeare's play, as the proponents of the "bad quarto" theory maintain, why did the printer fail to acknowledge the play as a piece by William Shakespeare, staged by the Chamberlain's and, subsequently, the King's Men (as the 1631 quarto of *The Shrew* does) rather than continuing to sell it under the name of an obscure and defunct troupe? In fact, there are good reasons to believe that *A Shrew* was not a hasty, commercial remake of Shakespeare's play, but an older play which Shakespeare was commissioned to revise for the newly constituted company under Lord Chamberlain's patronage.

It was, again, Milan Lukeš who, in 1985, despite the mainstream opinion, expressed his conviction that the Shakespearian text represents a higher stage in the development of Elizabethan comedy than the anonymous version.[159] In his analysis, he focuses on the different rhetoric of both plays and the fact that whereas the inner story of *A Shrew* takes place in Greece, the locale of the play proper of *The Shrew* is Italy. Lukeš considers these changes as a metonymical indication of the transformation of the older, crudely classicising comedy in the manner of Plautus, decorated with high Petrarchian rhetoric,

[159] Lukeš 57: "Avšak žádné výsvětlení, žádné dohadování textové geneze nemůže a nesmí zastřít věc podstatnou, která právě v porovnání se *Zkrocením jedné zlé ženy* vynikne: že totiž, při všech nedostatcích, představuje shakespearovské *Zkrocení* vyšší stadium vývoje alžbětinské komedie, podobně jako *Král Jan* je vůči *Neklidné vládě* vyšším stadiem historické hry."

into the modern comedy in the Italian manner, drawing in a creative way from the *commedia erudita* and *commedia dell'arte*. To support his claim, he draws attention to the character of Gremio, who has no parallel in *A Shrew* version and who is, in a stage direction in Act 1, Scene 1 of *The Shrew*, described as a pantaloon, a stock character from the *commedia dell'arte*. Other instances of contamination of the Italian comedy are, according to Lukeš, the character of a pedant (paralleled by Phylotus in *A Shrew*) and the delineation of *The Shrew*'s servants, especially Grumio, who, in Lukeš's words, marks the change of the conventionalised plebeian verbal clownery into the plebeian dramatic character.[160]

Seven years later, Leah Marcus took a similar approach to the anonymous play and drew attention to the ideological shift in the depiction of female subordination in both plays. Whereas, in *A Shrew*, Kate's appeal to women to obey their husbands at the end of the play is on a traditionally religious basis and presents a wife as a man's loyal partner in need (sc. 14, ll. 114–42), Katherine's final monologue in *The Shrew* draws from the concept of the household modelled upon the kingdom, in which husband is the magistrate and wife a passive subject (5.2.140–83) – a pattern which, as Marcus stresses, was at the time "only beginning to emerge as the most desirable family model for haut bourgeois households".[161] At the same time, Marcus notes a change in the introduction of the actors from the induction: from "humble, ill-educated itinerants" of *A Shrew*, who manage to give Sly the excitement he wants, to "urbane and well-educated" professionals of *The Shrew*, who present an entertainment far beyond Sly's low tastes.[162] Marcus connects this shift with the institutionalisation of the professional theatre in England in the 1590s and the rising status of the acting profession around the time *The Shrew* was written. Summarizing her observations, Marcus states, rather tentatively, that "*A Shrew* sounds distinctly earlier" and suggests it be treated as an alternative text to *The Shrew* of equal authority.[163]

Before stating any conclusion as to the relationship of the two versions of the play, let us briefly examine the second observation of mainstream contemporary criticism concerning the dramaturgical superiority of the unfinished framing story in the Shakespeare version. Much effort has been invested in recent decades in attempts to explain what might have led Shakespeare to let Sly disappear from the stage early on in the play without any explanation. Hosley, for instance, assumes that *The Shrew* was supposed

[160] See ibid.
[161] Marcus 187.
[162] Marcus 189.
[163] See Marcus 197–98.

to lack a "didactic" dramatic epilogue in favour of "the subtler and more thoughtful course of reflecting the 'supposes' of his [*i.e.*, Shakespeare's] play proper in supposes of its induction", and also to allow the actors from the induction to take part in the final scene, when more than fifteen characters are required on the stage.[164] Sears Jayne, on the other end, notes that Shakespeare, unlike the anonymous author of *A Shrew*, draws in his induction considerable attention to the dream motif and the dream-reality dichotomy, and suggests that, from Act 1, Scene 2 onwards, the audience watch not the piece given by the players, but "Sly's dream-sequel to the one scene which the players have performed",[165] during which the actor who originally played Sly becomes Petruchio and his original place on the upper stage is taken by another actor in Sly's dress, who remains there, sleeping, until Act 5, Scene 2, after which he performs a jig in form of pantomime. H. J. Oliver is of the opinion that, whereas the main dramatic purpose of the induction was "to set the tone for the play-within-the-play" and present it "as a none-too-serious comedy",[166] the lack of its proper ending leaves room for several possible interpretations of the contained story.[167]

In these examples, however different the opinions they represent, we might discern several characteristics common to most comments upon the frame action of *The Shrew*. First of all, is the common bewilderment over the unfinished plot and a determined effort to assign some dramatic function to it on the one hand, which sometimes leads to bizarre, unparalleled constructs such as that of Jayne. Secondly, we might observe an exuberant, almost unconditional belief in the textual definitiveness of the Folio version of the play and the quality of the Shakespeare text, which, as we shall see, is largely unsubstantiated.

Despite John Dover Wilson's conviction,[168] the Folio version is not based on an acting transcript of the play, nor was it typeset from the promptbook, as Jayne suggests.[169] As Oliver observes, the character of non-dialogic portions of the play strongly indicates that the source for the Folio text was Shakespeare's own manuscript. But whereas Oliver focuses on the precision of certain stage directions and tends to excuse obvious mistakes in others (for instance the faulty list of the dramatic characters present on the stage at the

[164] Hosley, "Was There a 'Dramatic Epilogue' to *The Taming of the Shrew*?", 29.

[165] Sears Jayne, "The Dreaming of *The Shrew*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 17 (1966): 41–56 at 48.

[166] Oliver 42.

[167] Such a determination to reconcile the unconformities of the plot does not, however, take into consideration the context of the drama of the period. Although the present discussion postulates a hypothetical "post-Folio" version of Shakespeare's play in which some of the inconsistencies would be corrected (see below), serious discrepancies in plots themselves were nothing that bothered early modern dramatists or their audiences too much (see Maguire 206–11).

[168] See John Dover Wilson, "The Copy for the Text of 1623", in *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1928) 97–126 at 120–26.

[169] See Jayne 41.

beginning of 5. 2), Lukeš finds the stage directions generally sketchy, sometimes erroneous and confusing, with an occasional tendency to clarify and amend them subsequently, which, however, obfuscates things even more.[170] A hint that Shakespeare's text had probably undergone some revision before it became a stage version is the direction "Enter aloft" at the beginning of the second induction scene, which testifies to a rather thoughtless and overpretentious treatment of the playing space. Although staging in the gallery above the main platform would theoretically be possible,[171] having such a long scene, with at least six characters present at the same time, anywhere but on the main stage would be highly impractical even in such an amphitheatric arena as the Theatre or the Globe (and perhaps even more challenging in the Blackfriars, where the play was staged according to the title-page of the 1631 quarto), whereas it would almost surely be impossible in a performance at the court, which was recorded in 1633. As the parallel stage direction of *A Shrew* testifies, no vertical division of the stage took place during performances of the anonymous version and all the action could very well remain on the main platform.

Another noteworthy aspect of the text is the occurrence of several inconsistencies in the wooing subplot, especially in the characters of Hortensio, whose rôle is smaller than it might seem at the beginning, and Tranio, whose part in contrast unexpectedly grows. G. R. Hibbard attributes this to Shakespeare's change of plan when writing the play,[172] a conclusion later accepted by Oliver as well.[173] But whereas Hibbard and Oliver consider the Folio text of *The Shrew* as the final product, perhaps preceded by a lost, more compact Shakespeare version, in the context of the missing parts of one of the subplots and the transitional, semifinished character of the stage directions, it is perhaps more probable that when the First Folio was being prepared, Heminges and Condell for some reason used an authorial draft of the play, which witnesses the change of the playwright's mind during the writing process, only to be later revisited and transformed into a, now lost, version reflecting Shakespeare's more complete dramatic intentions. A supportive, but by no means decisive, argument for such an assertion is the length of the Folio play, which is more than 300 lines greater than the ideal length of an Elizabethan performance as calculated by Hart.

[170] See Lukeš 54.

[171] See "Above", "Aloft", "Gallery" and "Music room" in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions*.

[172] See Introduction, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by William Shakespeare, 1968 (London: Penguin Books, 1995) 9–46 at 43.

[173] See Oliver 10–13.

Regarding our initial question as to what extent we can apply our observations concerning the function of the frame material of *The Taming of a Shrew* to the Shakespeare version, two conclusions present themselves: 1) Bearing in mind that determining, with any degree of certainty, the primacy between two plays which are not more than a few years apart (and where neither internal nor external evidence convincingly anchors either of them in time) is very problematic, in the light of stylistic, thematic and ideological analysis of both versions, the present author is of the opinion that the anonymous play preceded the Shakespeare text, having probably been written in the late 1580s or early 1590s and around the year 1594 respectively. No comparison of minute textual details of the printed versions of the plays can lead to any conclusion as to the dependency of one text on the other, especially if one of the texts seems to be a stage adaptation of a lost original and the other the author's foul papers. 2) If we decide to accept the hypothesis that the Folio version represents Shakespeare's rough draft (perhaps slightly revised by a later hand for the purposes of the printed edition) which records the change of dramatic plan during the writing process, we might assume that the playwright's final decision was to reject the enveloping action drawn from the mediaeval poetic tradition, which he might have considered old-fashioned and rather alien to a comedy of the Italian manner, and focus solely on the contained play.

We might, furthermore, suppose that when the last revision for the fair copy/playbook/acting transcript took place in order to remove at least some of the inconsistencies of the text and perhaps also to approach a more desirable length, Shakespeare omitted the 200-line-long stem of the originally intended, but later abandoned Christopher Sly plot, which, without the proper development or ending, lacked most of its dramatic functions and as such had become dramaturgically redundant. That the play about the taming of a shrewish wife worked perfectly on the stage without introducing a comical sleeper and a would-be dream-frame can be observed in the remakes of the story by Shakespeare's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century successors, who did not include the Sly material to their versions, obviously considering the play proper strong enough to constitute a plausible and successful dramatic piece on its own.[174]

[174] See Marcus 191–92.

## 2. 7 Delineating a Dramatic Character through Dreams

So far we have mainly focused on the topos of sleep, its various treatments in Shakespeare's plays and its dramatic implications. In the section to follow, the discussion will be aimed at the motif of dreaming in the Shakespearian dramatic canon and how it contributes to the design of a dramatic character and, by extension, a dramatic plot. Dream prophecies – a special category of dreams both in terms of their content and function – will be described separately in Chapter 3 of this study.

As we have explained in the introductory section of the present chapter, sleeping and dreaming were, in the early modern world, two interrelated phenomena with common cultural and intellectual status and connotations. From the quality of sleepers and dreamers, the quality of sleeping and dreaming derived, which, with an informed reading, allowed an invaluable insight into people's minds. Three centuries later, the father of the modern investigation of dreams, Sigmund Freud, corroborated the conclusions of his humanistic predecessors in his discussion of the ethical side of dreams, asserting that the dream "shows the real, if not the entire nature of man, and is a means of making the hidden psychic life accessible to our understanding".[175] The Homeric gates of horn and ivory from which dreams issued, a concept still living in the Renaissance,[176] mutated, as it were, into the notion of the dream itself as a metaphorical gate into man's inner life and all secret aspects of his personality.

It is remarkable that Shakespeare explored the dramatic possibilities of dreams from the earliest stages of his career. Act 1, Scene 2 of the already discussed *Henry VI, Part Two* contains a fascinating exchange between Duke Humphrey and his wife Eleanor upon the nature and significance of dreaming – a dialogue already containing many

[175] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Macmillan, 1913) 60.

[176] Although there is no mention of Homer's gates in the Shakespeare canon, a reference to the concept can be found in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, when Archimago sends for an "ydle dreame" to tempt the Red Cross Knight, which comes through the ivory gate and makes the knight dream of "loves and lustfull play" (1. 1. 46, 47). Another example is *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, in which the ghost of Don Andrea returns from the underworld through the gate of horn to watch "the author of [his] death, / Don Balthazar the Prince of Portingale, / Depriv'd of life by Bel-imperia [Andrea's love]" (Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. Philip Edwards [London: Methuen, 1959] 8 = 1. 1. 87–89). George Chapman, the first translator of Homer's both major poems into English (completed 1616), in *The Shadow of Night*, writes that "From the silk vapours of her [*i.e.*, Night's] ivory port, / Sweet Protean dreams she sends of every sort […] But from Night's port of horn she greets our eyes / With graver dreams inspired with prophecies" (Chapman 8). Of non-fiction literature, the twin-gates of dreams are described in the early-modern edition of Bartholomeus Anglicus's *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, in the chapter discussing the nature of dreaming (see Bartholomeus Anglicus, *Batman upon Bartholome, His Booke De Proprietatibus Rerum* [London: Thomas East, 1582] fol. 84[r]).

characteristics of Shakespeare's later treatments of dreams, yet, in terms of its length, focus and complexity, unparalleled in the Shakespeare dramatic oeuvre.

At the beginning of the scene, Eleanor asks the Duke why he is so sad and offers him to "lengthen [his hand] with [hers]" (l. 12) if his own is too short to reach King Henry's diadem. Humphrey reproaches his wife for the "canker of ambitious thoughts" (l. 18) and confesses that the "troublous dream this night doth make [him] sad" (l. 22). Eleanor promptly asks her husband about the contents of his nightmare and promises him to "requite it / With sweet rehearsal of [her] morning dream" (ll. 23f). Upon his wife's invitation, the Duke narrates his disturbing vision of his protector's staff broken in two pieces by Cardinal Beaufort and the heads of the Dukes of Somerset and Suffolk placed on each side (see the following chapter for further discussion of Humphrey's dream). Dame Eleanor, however, quickly explains the dream away and gives an account of her own nocturnal experience:

> [*Duchess.*] Methought I sat in seat of majesty
> In the cathedral church of Westminster,
> And in that chair where kings and queens were crowned,
> Where Henry and Dame Margaret kneeled to me,
> And on my head did set the diadem.
> (1. 2. 36–40)

Listening to her report, the Duke is appalled and accuses his wife of treacherous intentions, warning her that this way she could easily cause his and her fall "From top of honour to disgrace's feet" (l. 49). Eleanor gets upset and maintains that she has told her husband "but her dream" (l. 52). Finally, Humphrey soothes Eleanor by saying that he is "pleased again" (l. 55).

Although the *Henry VI* trilogy is replete with numerous characters, which, with little room for their proper delineation, are often only convincing just enough to constitute a plausible political story, the dream scene shows a special interest which the dramatist had in the characters of Humphrey and Eleanor, who furnish the central plot of the play. Whereas the reason for the good Duke Humphrey's political fall lies in his naïveté and inability to prepare himself for his opponents' attack, which consequently leads to the debilitation of the King's power and yet another domestic conflict, Dame Eleanor's weakness is obviously her personal ambitions, which ultimately trigger her husband's downfall. From the beginning of the scene – the first occasion when the audience actually see the Duchess on the stage – Shakespeare makes clear what the character's tendencies are and, by means of the Duke's misgivings, he stresses their potentially dangerous nature. A hint at Eleanor's decisive rôle in the Duke's fate can be found in Beaufort's and

Gloucester's fierce exchange in the opening scene of *1 Henry VI*, where Beaufort claims that "Thy [*i.e.*, Humphrey's] wife is proud: she holdeth you in awe, / More than God or religious churchmen may" (ll. 39f).[177] By incorporating common human qualities in the struggle for political power depicted in the play, an underlying theme of Shakespeare's histories in general becomes apparent: history is not primarily created by an abstract Providence or a set of random events, but by concrete deeds, done by concrete people with concrete motives.

In order to draw the audience's attention to the two characters, Shakespeare combines elements of both contemporary dream-lore and established literary tradition. As Carol Schreier Rupprecht notes, both the Duke and Eleanor mention the timing of their dreams – Humphrey's oneiric experience took place "this night", whereas the Duchess calls her vision a "morning dream".[178] For the humanistic dream theories, the time of the dream was of high importance since morning dreams were generally believed to be true.[179] It might, therefore, seem surprising that, in spite of contemporary tenets, the Duke's dream is fulfilled in the course of *2* and *3 Henry VI*, whilst the Duchess' story proves wrong. Rupprecht interprets this reversal as an example of "Shakespeare's characteristically free and apparently original alternations of the most basic of oneiric conventions", which contribute to "the growing secularization of dream by dismantling the traditional hierarchy which placed greater value on predawn dreams because of their more spiritualized etiology".[180] Although Rupprecht is right when assuming that Shakespeare intentionally refers to popular dream-lore, her further conclusions are somewhat oversophisticated.

Dramatically, the references to specific times of the dreams must not be taken literally. In the context of the scene, it is obvious that Eleanor probably fabricated her vision in order to make her husband pursue the crown and, by stressing the morning

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[177] There is no critical consensus as to the order in which the *Henry VI* plays were actually written. The position of the present author is that *2 Henry VI* preceded *1 Henry VI* and the mention of the proud Duchess in *1 Henry VI* (which is the only mention of her in the play) is an afterthought inserted in the play to place its events in the context of the already existing duology *2* and *3 Henry VI* and to contribute to the unity of the three stories.

[178] See Carol Schreier Rupprecht, "The Drama of History and Prophecy: Shakespeare's Use of Dream in *2 Henry VI*", *Dreaming* 3 (1993): 211–27 at 215.

[179] William Vaughan, *Naturall and Artificial Directions for Health* (London: Richard Bradocke, 1600) 32: "Dreames are either tokens of things past, or significants of things to come. And surely if a mans minde be free from cares, and he dreame in the morning, there is no doubt, but affaires then dreamed of will truely come to passe." The belief in morning dreams' veracity, however, dates back to classical antiquity (see Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 11–12; and Stearns 51–69). In oriental tradition, on the other hand, nocturnal and diurnal dreams were of same credibility. It was, nevertheless, recommended to interpret a dream early in the morning, when the minds of the dreamer and the interpreter are not burdened by daily worries (see Bronislav Ostřanský, *Středověká arabská nauka o snech a jejich výkladu* [Mladá Boleslav: Škoda auto University, 2007] 14).

[180] Rupprecht, "The Drama of History and Prophecy", 217.

timing, she merely wants to surround the dream with an aura of credibility. Humphrey, on the other hand, is sceptical about dreams in general, preferring reason to superstition. When, later on in the play, a miraculously cured man who has just received his sight at St. Alban's shrine is presented to the King and Queen, claiming that he had been called "A hundred times and oftener, in [his] sleep, / By good Saint Alban" (2.1.92f), Gloucester cleverly exposes him as a fraud. The Duke's mention of last night's nightmare therefore rather represents his own judgement of the validity of his dream, presaging Humphrey's inability to understand or avert the ensuing danger. In the Quarto version of the play, Humphrey does not end the dream conversation by the general statement "I am pleased again" (as in the Folio), but by saying to his wife "Nay Nell, Ile giue no credit to a dreame"[181] – a conventional dramatic formula rejecting the significance of dreams.[182]

As far as the actual content of Eleanor's dream is concerned, we can find several parallels both among pre- and post-Shakespearian plays making an explicit link between the dream of endangering the position of a magistrate and treason, indicating that this specific dream topos was a popular dramatic commonplace and Shakespeare might have expected the audience to respond to it. The tragicomedy *Damon and Pythias* (1564) by Richard Edwards (c. 1523–1566) contains a short incident, which is meant to illustrate the cruelty of Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse:

> *Stephano.* As I this morning pas'd in the street,
> With a woful man (going to his death) did I meet,
> Many people followed; and I of one secretly
> Asked the cause why he was condemned to die;
> [Who] whispered in mine ear: "Nought hath he done but thus:
> In his sleep he dreamed he had killed Dionysius;
> Which dream told abroad, was brought to the king in post;
> By whom, condemned for suspicion, his life he hath lost."
> Marcia was his name, as the people said.
> (ll. 289–97)[183]

In the already discussed *Orlando Furioso*, dreams of the crown are used as a device to illustrate kingly ambitions of the principal antagonist, Sacripant, who, in a soliloquy, confides that he thinks of the royal symbols both day and night:

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[181] Shakespeare, *The First part of the Contention*, sig. B1$^{r}$, l. 22.

[182] Cf. the opening scene of *Arden of Faversham*, in which Arden rebukes his wife for calling another man's name in sleep on the previous night. Although Alice has indeed a secret affair with the man, she manages to convince her husband that "'Tis like [she] was asleep when [she] named him, / For being awake he comes not in [her] thoughts" (*Arden of Faversham*, ed. Martin White [London: Ernest Benn, 1982] 6 = sc. 1, ll. 67f). Finally, Arden believes Alice, saying "Nay, love, there is no credit in a dream" (l. 74). Similarly, when Iago fabricates the story of Cassio's dream of Desdemona in order to make Othello jealous, he feignedly rejects its importance, claiming "Nay, this was but his dream" (*Othello* 3. 3. 432).

[183] Richard Edward, *Damon and Pithias*, in *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas*, ed. and trans. Joseph Quincy Adams (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside P, 1924) 571–608. (Original editorial emendation.)

> [*Sacripant.*] Sweet are the thoughts that smother from conceit:
> For when I come and set me downe to rest,
> My chaire presents a throne of Maiestie;
> And when I set my bonnet on my head,
> Me thinkes I fit my forhead for a Crowne;
> And when I take my trunchion in my fist,
> A Scepter then comes tumbling in my thoughts;
> My dreames are princely, all of Diademes.
> (1.1.246–53)[184]

Sacripant finally does succeed in usurping the throne, but is unsuccessful in keeping it and soon is slain by Orlando. Although the characters of Greene's play are generally sketchy and poorly drawn, we might discern a considerable shift from Richard Edwards's treatment of the dream in the 1560s only as an episodic element of the plot, to its almost Shakespearian employment in the 1580s as a device allowing the audience an insight into the mind of an important character at the beginning of the play and also paving the way for the development of the plot.

A somewhat different employment of an oneiric symbol very similar to that from Shakespeare's play can be found in a rare example of Protestant history, *The Duchess of Suffolk* (1620s) by Thomas Drue (c. 1586–1627), which follows the story of Katherine Brandon, who was, during the reign of Queen Mary, persecuted for her faith and who later became a popular Protestant martyr. Towards the end of the play, the Catholic prelates Stephen Gardiner and Edmund Bonner (both arch-enemies to Katherine, who has managed to escape with her husband to the Continent) are involved in a dream discussion:

> *Gard.* I dreamt my Lord, that *Bertie* and the *Dutches*
> Were both advanc't vpon a regall throne,
> And had their temples wreath'd with glittering gold.
> *Bon.* That throne doe I interpret, is the stage
> Of horrid death, these wreathes of Gold, bright flames,
> That shall not onely circle in their browes,
> But wind about their bodies, till they waste,
> And be converted to a heape of ashes[.]
> (4.2.1658–65)[185]

Although the vision is, in terms of its contents, strikingly similar to Eleanor's, we might observe several significant differences. First of all, the subject of the dream and the

[184] Cf. Greene's "Maesia's Song" in *The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene*, Vol. 2, ed. J. Churton Collins (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1905) 308: "Sweet are the thoughts that sauour of content, / the quiet mind is richer than a crowne, / Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent, / the poore estate scornes fortunes angrie frowne. / Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such blis / beggers inioy, when Princes oft do mis. / The homely house that harbors quiet rest, / the cottage that affords no pride nor care, / The meane that grees with Countrie musick best, / the sweet consort of mirth and musicks fare, / Obscured life sets downe a type of blis, / a mince content both crowne and kingdome is."

[185] Robert Anthony Raines, "Thomas Drue's *The Duchess of Suffolk*: A Critical Old-Spelling Edition", Diss. U of Delaware, 1968.

dreamer are two different persons and the audience, therefore, does not learn from the dream report about Katherine's ambitions or fate, but is rather assured about the bishops' hatred towards her. Secondly, the episode takes place too late to expose any new information about the play's characters or establish any new themes of the plot. The animosity between Bishop Bonner and the Duchess is clear from the opening scene, in which Katherine criticises the Bishop's faith. As Robert Raines asserts, the weak artistic unity of the play and its generally thin characterisation only allow the individual episodes to serve "the sake of immediate audience effect", rather than constitute a greater dramatic plan.[186] It is, however, interesting to note that whereas upon Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne, the Duchess is restored to her estates, Bonner is mobbed and ultimately thrown into prison. The Bishop's fate is therefore similar to the dreamers' of the previous examples, despite all the differences between the dramatic functions of the dream episodes.

Rupprecht notes that a dream omen very close to Eleanor's situation is included in *Somniorum Synesiorum Libri IIII* (1562) by Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576), who writes that for an unworthy plebeian, a royal procession signifies hanging (*plebeio inepto regalis pompa suspendium significat*), since those who are led to execution are also surrounded by attendants (*qui ad supplicium ducuntur, satellitibus circundantur*).[187] An analogous interpretation can be found in the popular mediaeval dreambook *Somniale Danielis*, which says that seeing oneself being encircled (lit. crowned) by others presages death (*Cum ceteris coronari se videre: mortem*).[188] It seems, therefore, that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, there used to be certain connotations linked with the dream of reaching for royal majesty[189] which dramatists liked to exploit since they knew what responses and anticipations it would stir in the audience. Although the degree of the dream symbol's effectiveness and the scope of its function within the design of the plays vary, it always seems to be closely connected to the moral dispositions of a character (who is not necessarily the dreamer or the subject of the dream) and his or her ultimate fate. Such a method of delineation is dramaturgically very convenient, since it allows the playwright, within a limited playing space, to present directly the most crucial aspects of the figure's

[186] Raines 75.

[187] Girolamo Cardano, *Somniorum Synesiorum Libri Quatour*, Vol. 1, ed. Jean-Yves Boriaud (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2008) 108 = 1. 15. 38; see Rupprecht 218–19.

[188] Daniel the Prophet [attributed to], *Somniale Danielis: An Edition of a Mediaeval Latin Dream Interpretation Handbook*, ed. Lawrence T. Martin (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1981) 113. Cf. King Richard II's observation that "within the hollow crown / That rounds the mortal temples of a king / Keeps Death his court" (*Richard II* 3.2.156–58).

[189] Achmet ibn Sirin [attributed to], *Achmetis F. Seirim Oneirocritica*, in *Artemidori Daldiani & Achmetis Sereimi F. Oneirocritica* (Paris: Marc Orry, 1603) 228: *Quicunque deprœhenduntur honores sibi regios usurpare, mortem merentur*.

personality without the need for a lengthy exposition, which might unnecessarily complicate the plot, or without having to resort to introducing a character via another character's report at the expense of an immediate dramatic impact.

In some cases, however, a dream is not used simply as a device to expose a character at the beginning of the narrative, but also as a means of summarisation and judgement of their actions which the audience have witnessed. We have already determined that the dream of George, Duke of Clarence, at the beginning of the first movement of *Richard III*, does not only establish the viciousness of Richard, but also refers to George's deeds of the previous part of the tetralogy, bringing the characterisation of one play to another. We have also stated that this episode is closely connected with the murder of the princes at the beginning of the second movement of the play, not only by both scenes' thematic relation and their continuity in depicting Richard's cruelty, but also by the fact that Shakespeare modelled both of them on a single incident of his principal dramatic source. The third and final scene of the "nocturnal chain", completing the dramatic arc, takes place almost at the end of the play, just before the battle of the Bosworth Field, in which King Richard and his army will confront the forces of the Earl of Richmond. The originally homogenous stage is, for the purposes of this scene, horizontally divided into two halves, in which Richard and Henry Richmond respectively are shown sleeping, being visited by ghosts of all Richard's victims of *3 Henry VI* and *Richard III*. The ghosts foretell Richard's fall, while to Richmond, the future King Henry VII, they give blessings and wish him undisturbed sleep:

> *Ghosts of the princes.* (*to Richard*) Dream on thy cousins, smothered in the Tower.
> Let us be lead within thy bosom, Richard,
> And weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death.
> Thy nephews' souls bid thee despair and die.
> (*To Richmond*) Sleep, Richmond, sleep in peace, and wake in joy.
> Good angels guard thee from the boar's annoy.
> Live, and beget a happy race of kings!
> Edward's unhappy sons do bid thee flourish.
> (5.5.100–107)

Having awoken, Richard complains of his "coward conscience" and admits that "shadows tonight / Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard / Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers" (l. 132, 170–72). Richmond, in contrast, has had, according to his own words, "The sweetest sleep and fairest boding dreams / That ever entered in a drowsy head" (l. 181f).

The King's bad sleep is hinted at in the course of the play several times. At the beginning of the second half, Richard expresses hope that after the deaths of his brother's

sons, all dangers to his kingship will be eliminated and he will finally get a peaceful sleep, since the princes have been – in his own words – his "sweet sleep's disturbers" (4. 2. 74). Richard is, however, wrong about the cause of his sleeplessness. In the play, it is clearly his previous and future deeds that make his sleep forever cursed. Already in scene 1. 3, Queen Margaret wishes Richard never to have rest, saying that "No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, / Unless it be while some tormenting dream / Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils" (ll. 222–24). The foreboding character of these words is proved in 4. 1, when Lady Anne, Richard's wife, confides to Queen Elizabeth that her husband has indeed been suffering from nightmares, claiming that "never yet one hour in his bed / Did [she] enjoy the golden dew of sleep, / But with his timorous dreams was still awaked" (ll. 82–84). The main source for these images is Tudor historiography, which mentions Richard's disturbed sleep as a punishment for his evildoings. *The History of King Richard III* (1519) by Thomas More (1478–1535) reads that

> after this abhominable deede [*i.e.*, the infanticide] done, he [*i.e.*, King Richard] neuer hadde quiet in his minde, […] he toke ill rest a nightes, lay long wakyng and musing, sore weried with care and watch, rather slumbred then slept, troubled wyth feareful dreames, sodainly sommetyme sterte vp, leape out of his bed and runne about the chamber, so was his restles herte continually tossed and tumbled with the tedious impression and stormy remembrance of his abominable dede.[190]

The story was adopted almost word-for-word by major Elizabethan chroniclers, such as Richard Grafton and Raphael Holinshed, and became a staple part of the Elizabethan image of King Richard. Even the nightmare before the battle is not completely Shakespeare's invention, but has a historical prototype. Richard Grafton, in the additions to John Hardyng's chronicle, notes that on that night, the King

> had a terrible dreame in his slepe, seming that he sawe horrible deuilles appere vnto hym, & pulling and haling of hym that he coulde take no rest, which visyon tylled hym full of feare & also of heuy care when he waked[.] […] But I thinke that this was not a dreame, but rather his conscience pricked with the sharpe stynge of his mischeuous offences[.][191]

Although the anonymous *The True Tragedy* does not mention the incident, in Thomas Legge's version, King Richard confides to the Duke of Norfolk before the conflict that the previous night he was terrified by "horrible visions" (*horrenda noctis visa terrent proximae*, 3. 5. 4. 4432), having suddenly been attacked in sleep by "a baleful cohort of Furies" and fallen prey to "raging daemons" (*subito premebant dira furiarum cohors* […] *et foeda rabidis praeda sum daemonibus*, ll. 4435, 4437). Shakespeare saw the dramatic potential of the tale and in order to intensify its impact upon the audience and widen its

[190] Thomas More, *The History of King Richard III*, ed. J. Rawson Lumby (London: J. Clay, 1883) 85.

[191] John Hardyng, *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1812) 544.

theatrical possibilities, he most probably combined it with a general remark of the Page in *The True Tragedy*:

> [*Page.*] For now that he [*i.e.*, King Richard] obtain the Diademe,
> But with such great discomfort to his minde,
> That he had better liued a priuate man,
> […]
> Those Peeres which he vnkindly murthered,
> Doth crie for iustice at the hands of God,
> And he in iustice sends continuall feare,
> For to afright him both at bed and board[.][192]

A natural, dramatically not very appealing dream stirred by bad conscience was thus transformed into a divine punishment, executed by the ghosts of Richard's victims. From the purely dramatic perspective, the procession of those whom the King in the last two plays of the tetralogy deprived of life once again contributes to the unity of the plot and of the entire historical saga, at the same time arresting the action for a while and letting the spectators prepare for the narrative's grand finale. Despite Bain Tate Stewart's assertion that supernatural dreams "do not contribute significantly to the revelation of character in the drama",[193] by not making the dream purely a matter of Richard's conscience but a manifestation of a supernatural judgement, a dramatic possibility also opens for the simultaneous exposure of both sleeping characters, not just one.

For Richard, the steady entrances and exits of victims in the chronological order in which they were killed indeed give the impression of judgement day, during which the list of sins is slowly read to the sinner. The recapitulation of Richard's guilt before the audience gives the final testimony of his wicked nature and presents the reason why Richard must be defeated and die. With its dominant position at the end of the play, the scene refers back to the two already discussed murdering scenes at the beginning and in the middle of the dramatic narrative, ultimately completing the image of the villain. As Alois Bejblík observes, the most typical design of Elizabethan drama for presenting an argument is the trichotomic sequence: 1) intention, 2) scenic presentation, and 3) recapitulation. This scheme, as Bejblík proves, can be discernible on both microstructural (*i.e.*, within the design of a single scene) and macrostructural (*i.e.*, within the structure of the entire plot) levels of Elizabethan plays.[194] The three-stage delineation of Richard can therefore be summarised with the help of the three sleeping scenes as: 1) the ambitious Duke of

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[192] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. G4$^r$, ll. 4–6, 16–19.

[193] Stewart, "Characterization through Dreams", 27.

[194] See Alois Bejblík, "Nárys specifických znaků řeči a syžetu alžbětinského dramatu", in *Alžbětinské drama*, Vol. 3, ed. Alois Bejblík, Jaroslav Hornát and Milan Lukeš (Prague: Odeon, 1985) 24–40 at 35–36.

Gloucester pursuing the crown, killing his opponents (the death of Clarence), 2) the anxious King Richard wanting to keep the crown, killing his opponents with even greater bestiality (the deaths of the princes), 3) Richard being sentenced and punished for his previous deeds, losing the crown (the death of Richard).

In Richmond's case, however, the function of the dream is not and cannot be to summarise, but rather to introduce the character to the audience. Although his name is referred to several times in the play, Henry Richmond actually appears on the stage as late as in Act 5, Scene 2, shortly before the final battle. His only previous appearance in Act 4, Scene 7 of *3 Henry VI* is limited to King Henry VI's prediction that the head of this "pretty lad" is "by nature framed to wear a crown" and that the young Earl will "bless a regal throne", being "England's hope", whose "looks are full of a peaceful majesty" (ll. 68–76). Despite this promising presentation, Henry does not pronounce a single line in the scene and even in *Richard III*, he is not given any space to develop into an independent character. The sleeping scene is therefore the first (and only) opportunity for the dramatist to justify the young Duke's rôle of a predestined future king.

If we compare the ghosts' prophecies for Richard and Henry, it seems as if they were intended for creatures of entirely different kinds. Whereas those belonging to Richard refer to his concrete evil deeds from the past, wishing him fundamentally human anxieties such as terror, fainting and despair, those for Richmond leave his humanity almost completely aside, as if his natural body were not important, describing him purely as a saintly warrior, "virtuous and holy" (l. 82), whose army is going to be guarded by good angels (l. 92, 105, 129) and aided by God himself (l. 129). Richmond's oration to his soldiers continues in a similar tone, promising the men the same divine protection and peaceful sleep as the supernatural messengers had promised to him in his dream:

> [*Henry Earl of Richmond.*] God and our good cause fight upon our side.
> The prayers of holy saints and wrongèd souls,
> Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our forces.
> Richard except, those whom we fight against
> Had rather have us win than him they follow.
> For what is he they follow? Truly, friends,
> A bloody tyrant and a homicide;
> […]
> One that hath ever been God's enemy.
> Then if you fight against God's enemy,
> God will, in justice, ward you as his soldiers.
> If you do sweat to put a tyrant down,
> You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain.
> (ll. 194–200, 206–10)

Richard's speech, in contrast, is completely devoid of God or assurances of the just cause of his fight: it is only replete with hatred, offences towards the enemy and threats (5. 6. 44–71).

Although the character of Richmond as a human being remains an enigma, his royal charisma becomes clearly apparent. The blessings which he is given in his sleep and his subsequent words are strikingly similar to those of another king, Richard II, whose deposition, according to Shakespeare's dramatic narrative, stood at the beginning of the War of Roses, on a path leading inexorably the Battle of Bosworth Field. Upon returning from the war with Ireland, Richard ponders on the concept of kingship, expressing his security in the divinity of his post, which protects him from his enemies:

> [*King Richard.*] The breath of worldly men cannot depose
> The deputy elected by the Lord.
> For every man that Bolingbroke hath pressed
> To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
> God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
> A glorious angel. Then, if angels fight,
> Weak men must fall; for heaven still guards the right.
> (*Richard II* 3. 2. 52–58)

We may therefore conclude that Shakespeare never intended to present Henry Richmond as a real person. Robert Ornstein argues that the play is so much focused on the character of Richard and so little on Richmond, that "were it not for the stage direction of the last scene of the play, we would not know that he [*i.e.*, Richmond] kills Richard in combat".[195] The reason is that *Richard III* is above all a study of evil, which, with its viciousness and sanguinariness, marks a truly cathartic end of the turbulent tetralogy. As the message communicated to the audience through the spirits indicates, Henry is predominantly a device which intervenes from the outside to overthrow this evil – a kind of a *deus ex machina*.

The presence of the ghosts on the stage only deepens the political dimension of the event. They are far from the typical ghosts of revenge tragedies, who, as Imke Pannen stresses, provoke conflicts and persuade the revenger "to finally commit a punishment for a deed that has been waiting to be repaid".[196] Their vocabulary has also little in common with that of the dead Clarence of the induction of *The True Tragedy*, who with "the hysteria of the Senecan ghost"[197] (in Pannen's words) thirsts for bloody vengeance,

[195] Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, 1972) 79.
[196] Imke Pannen, *When the Bad Bleeds: Mantic Elements in English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy* (Goettingen: V&Runipress, 2010) 223.
[197] Pannen 184.

stylishly in Latin (*Cresse cruor sanguinis, satietur sanguine cresse, quod spero scitio. O scitio, scitio, vendicta*).[198] The apparitions of *Richard III* remain outside the main action of the play and impassively, in the manner of non-participating narrators pass their judgements. Michelle O'Callaghan argues that in both early modern English fiction and non-fiction literature, ghosts were frequently used as "rhetorical figures that are highly sensitive to change, characteristically returning to speak to the living at moments of historical crisis or alternation".[199] Such ghosts returned from the dead to "bring the past into the present",[200] that is, to give either positive or negative exemplars from the past to the present generation and set ideal patterns for future. The ghosts of *Richard III* have the function of the presenters of the glorious past, denouncing the dark present symbolised by Richard and predicting bright future for the country symbolised by the young Henry. Richmond's character is, according to their presentation, first and foremost a vehicle of regal mysticism, which kingship was deprived of by the deposition of Richard II and now, due to the blessed intervention, finally returns to the English throne.[201]

It seems that in the course of his dramatic career, Shakespeare considered defining the competence of the King through dreams as an effective device. An analogous situation to that of *Richard III* can be found in the historical duology *Henry IV*, which, albeit in a very different context, also juxtaposes two claimants for the post of the King of England: King Henry IV's oldest son, Prince Hal, and Henry "Hotspur" Percy, son to the Earl of Northumberland. Whereas the entire duology, as we have already explained, centres in the reformation of the future King Henry V from a prodigal son to an honourable ruler, the first half of the story predominantly delineates the conflict between the two young aristocrats for King Henry IV's favour and, later on, even for the office of the King itself.

Already at the beginning of the duology, the audience are assured of the qualities of the Prince. In the very first scene with him, Hal reveals in the soliloquy his plans to redeem himself and demonstrate the abilities of a good monarch (1. 2. 173–95). Hotspur, in

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[198] *The True Tragedie of Richard the Third*, sig. A1$^{r}$, ll. 6f. Barron Field reconstructs the corrupt Latin sentences as *Cresce cruor! Sanguis satietur sanguine! Cresce, quod spero citò! O citò, citò, vendicta!* ("Increase, blood! Let blood be satisfied with blood! Which I hope it quickly will! O quickly, quickly, revenge!") or perhaps *sitio vindictam* ("I thirst for vengeance!"). See *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*, ed. Barron Field (London: The Shakespeare Society, 1844) 3.

[199] Michelle O'Callaghan, "Dreaming of the Dead: Ghosts and History in the Early Seventeenth Century", in *Reading the Early-Modern Dream*, 81–95 at 81.

[200] O'Callaghan 83.

[201] Ornstein also asserts that by depicting Richmond as a spiritual leader and focusing rather on Richard's military campaign than Richmond's, Shakespeare also avoids the sensitive question of the Tudor claim to the English throne and Richmond's factual rebellion. See Ornstein 81.

contrast, is from the beginning depicted as impulsive, driven by emotions which he is unable to control. The Earl of Northumberland says about him that "Imagination of some great exploit / Drives him beyond the bounds of patience" (1. 3. 197f). The gap between Hal's reason and Hotspur's hot-headedness becomes clearly visible through the different attitudes of their characters towards dreams.

In Act 2, Scene 4, Lady Percy asks her excited husband what "curst melancholy" troubles his mind (l. 41) and mentions his restless sleep. Instead of giving her an answer, Hotspur leaves his castle to prepare for battle against the King with other rebels:

> [*Lady Percy.*] In thy faint slumbers I by thee have watched,
> And heard thee murmur tales of iron wars,
> Speak terms of manège to thy bounding steed,
> Cry 'Courage! To the field!' And thou hast talked
> Of sallies and retires, of trenches, tents,
> Of palisadoes, frontiers, parapets,
> Of basilisks, of cannon, culverin,
> Of prisoners ransom, and of soldiers slain,
> And all the currents of a heady fight.
> Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war,
> And thus hath so bestirred thee in thy sleep,
> That beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
> Like bubbles in a late disturbèd stream[.]
> (ll. 43–55)

Hotspur's dream is a paragon of the category of natural dreams reflecting the dreamer's daily thoughts, as presented by Mercutio. The anonymous soldier from the Queen Mab speech is given a name here and his nocturnal visions not only reveal his waking preoccupations, but also his general nature, since, as Stewart observes, the dream report would have suggested to the early modern audience familiar with contemporary oneiric theories that Hotspur "suffered from a form of unnatural or induced melancholy found in men of naturally choleric temperament".[202] This observation is consistent with Hotspur's behaviour in the play and the description of his temperament, previously given by his father. At the same time, the oneiric episode enters the syntax of the narrative, for Henry Percy, ironically, dies at the end of the play at his adversary's hands in the battle of which he dreams.

Prince Henry, on the other hand, decides not to follow his dreams because he knows that they would prevent him from being a competent king. Upon his coronation in *2 Henry IV*, the first decision that he makes as the King is to banish Falstaff from his presence, calling his previous life a "dream":

> *King Harry.* I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.

[202] Stewart, "Characterization Through Dreams", 32.

> How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
> I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
> So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;
> But, being awake, I do despise my dream.
> (5. 5. 45–49)

Eben Bass argues that Falstaff, who immediately after the coronation assumes that "the laws of England are at [his] commandment" (*2 Henry IV* 5.3.125f), and his tavern friends present for the newly crowned King the same danger as vain courtiers did for Richard II. "Henry must reject old Vanity," explains Bass, "lest Falstaff corrupt him and make him subject to deposition."[203] Raymond Gardette reaches a similar conclusion, claiming that the rejection of Falstaff by the Prince, who has become a sovereign, will "purify the mystical body of the King".[204] The dream, which according to humanistic lore represented passions and stood against the reason, becomes in the *Henry IV* duology a metaphor for behaviour standing against the concept of the good sovereign. Unlike Henry Percy, Prince Harry is very well aware that, in order to become one, he must not obey dreams or let passions, here in the form of old friendships, rule his actions.

Even more negative connotations accompany regal dreams in Shakespeare's later tragedy *Macbeth*. Upon their encounter with the three witches and having heard their prophecies, both Banquo and Macbeth are consumed by treacherous thoughts and bloody visions and face a moral dilemma whether they should stay loyal to the King or obey the predictions they have heard. William C. Carroll stresses that, in the late sixteenth-century Scotland and England, "witchcraft began to be understood as a species of treason" and that witches' aim was to "assault the body of the king".[205] Cumberland Clark sees the witches of *Macbeth* in the same light, maintaining that they realise their evil intentions not directly, but through the corruption of man's mind:

> In *Macbeth*, therefore, we find the supernatural beings exercising greater powers than ever, and succeeding in their fell purposes. […] [T]he Weird Sisters of *Macbeth* accomplish their vile purposes in the ruin of a great and noble character. […] [Man] could not be deprived of life, but only lured to self-destruction.[206]

The witches' temptation therefore becomes a test of character for both the lords. Banquo ultimately proves his moral strength and asks merciful powers to "Restrain in [him] cursed

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[203] Eben Bass, "Falstaff and the Succession", *College English* 24 (1963): 502–6 at 506.

[204] Raymond Gardette, "Les formes du songe dans le théâtre de Shakespeare", in *Le songe à la Renaissance*, ed. Françoise Charpentier (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 1990) 243–54 at 247: "La répudiation de Falstaff par le prince devenu souverain innocentera le corps mystique du roi[.]"

[205] William C. Carroll, Part Two: Cultural Contexts, in *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts*, by William Shakespeare (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999) 305.

[206] Cumberland Clark, *Shakespeare and the Supernatural* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1931) 83.

thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose" (2. 1. 8f). Macbeth, however, although "full o'th' milk of human kindness" (1. 5. 15), is too weak to resist spirits that "tend on mortal thoughts" (1. 5. 39), which his unscrupulous wife invokes, and decides to kill the King in order to fulfil the witches' prophecy.

The punishment for Macbeth and his wife's actions is not long in coming. Even prior to the regicide, Macbeth sees a horrid vision of a bloody dagger floating in the air, which he attributes to his murderous intentions, saying that "It is the bloody business which informs / Thus to mine eyes […] and wicked dreams abuse / The curtained sleep" (2. 1. 48f, 50f). He, however, does not listen to this warning and with "Tarquin's ravishing strides" (l. 56, cf. Giacomo's "Our Tarquin thus / Did softly press the rushes, ere he wakened / The chastity he wounded") approaches the King's bed. Although the murder itself is not staged, the consequences vividly testify to the deed's enormity. S. Viswanathan considers this design "a virtuoso master-stroke of theatrical art and economy", with "merely presentative or non-presentational means of evocation [producing] effects no less vivid and immediate than visual significances", and speculates that the reason for this might be "certain requirement of decorum".[207] It is, nevertheless, obvious that Shakespeare was more interested in the act's dramatic implications than the act itself. When Macbeth meets his lady again, he is not concrete about the murder – apart from a brief mention about the accompanying "noise", most probably meaning the King's screaming when Macbeth was stabbing him (2. 1. 14) – but gives a lengthy account of the events immediately following it.

Passing the adjacent chamber, Macbeth reports, he heard Prince Donalbain and another lodger crying from sleep "Murder!" and praying. When one of them exclaimed "God bless us", he was, however, unable to give a proper reply:

> *Macbeth.* But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
> I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
> Stuck in my throat.
> (2. 2. 29–31)

Upon this, Macbeth started to hallucinate, with a voice informing him that since he had murdered sleep, the right to sleep would forever be denied him:

> *Macbeth.* Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep' – the innocent sleep,
> Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
> The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,

[207] S. Viswanathan, "Sleep and Death: The Twins in Shakespeare", *Comparative Drama* 13 (1979): 49–64 at 56.

Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast –
(ll. 33–38)

It soon comes clear that both of these episodes presage the collapse of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's inner and outer worlds. Milford C. Jochums notes that the term "sleep" in the Elizabethan era carried generally accepted theological connotations, being frequently used for "[t]he physical death of one who had spiritual life"[208] (for a more detailed discussion of sleep as a metaphor of death, see Chapter 4. 3). By losing the benefits of sleep, Macbeth has therefore lost the prospect of dying a righteous death – the same death which is mentioned by Isaiah: "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness" (Is 57. 2). The King is sentenced to eternal damnation, unlike those whom he and Lady Macbeth have murdered:

[*Macbeth.*] [...] Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave.
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
(3. 2. 21–25)

Macbeth's inability to say Amen and participate in the benefits of a Christian blessing is only the first instance when he realises that he has divorced himself from God.[209] The morning after the murder, the sun does not rise over his kingdom. With "the heavens, as troubled with man's act" (2. 4. 5), the entire country is covered with darkness and sinks into chaos of almost Biblical dimensions:

*Old Man.* 'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.
*Ross.* And Duncan's horses – a thing most strange and certain –
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make
War with mankind.
*Old Man.* 'Tis said they eat each other.
*Ross.* They did so, to th'amazement of mine eyes
That looked upon't.
(2. 4. 10–20)

This hellish imagery is further furnished by a comical sequence in which the porter at Macbeth's castle imagines that he is a porter at Hell's gate and the visitors to the castle are

[208] Milford C. Jochums, "'Sleep No More'", *Illinois State University Journal* 31: 4 (1969): 19–24 at 22.

[209] Cf. Faustus's "My hearts so hardened I cannot repent, / Scarse can I name salvation, faith, or heaven, / But fearful ecchoes thunders in mine ears, / *Faustus*, thou art damn'd" (*Dr. Faustus*, sc. 5, ll. 200–3, original italics) (Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, ed. Roma Gill [Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990]) and Claudius's "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go" (*Hamlet* 3. 4. 97f).

sinners sentenced to damnation (2. 3). As Viswanathan notes, the eschatological overtones of the scene are deepened with Macduff's announcement of the horrendous discovery of Duncan's corpse, upon which a number of characters in their night-gowns rush onto the stage, suggesting the souls being called to parley.[210]

The ultimate judgement over Lady Macbeth (and, consequently, Macbeth himself) takes place towards the end of the play. When a doctor is called to examine the nature of Lady Macbeth's tormenting nightmares, he accurately recognizes the cause of her vexations, asserting that "More needs she the divine than the physician" (5. 1. 71). Macbeth's words, pronounced immediately before stepping into the King Duncan's bedroom, saying "The bell invites me. / Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell / That summons thee to heaven or to hell" (2. 1. 62–64), therefore prove ironically wise. Over the bed with the sleeping Duncan, Macbeth decided upon both men's fates. He sent the King to heaven and himself (as well as his wife) to hell.

Of precisely the opposite meaning is the deathbed vision of Queen Katherine (or rather the Princess Dowager) in Shakespeare's last historical play, *Henry VIII*. In her refuge at Kimbolton, the ailing Katherine is informed about the death of her most hated enemy, Cardinal Wolsey, who stood behind her separation from the King. Although the Princess initially shows little remorse for the man, she finally comes to terms with him and honours the ashes of "Whom [she] most hated living" (*Henry VIII* 4. 2. 43). Drábek points out that it is precisely this tension between enmity and reconciliation, taking place in the scene, that is one of the central themes of the play, whose "constructional principle […] is figurative" and which is, he asserts, "an allegorical account of subjective commotions".[211] At this point, Katherine asks the musicians to play "that sad note / [She] named [her] knell" (ll. 73f), upon which she falls asleep and is visited by ghosts in a pantomime:

> *The vision. Enter, solemnly tripping one after another, six personages, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces. They carry branches of bays or palm in their hands. They first congé unto Katherine, then dance; and, at certain changes, the first two hold a spare garland over her head at which the other four make reverent curtsies. Then the two that held the garland deliver the same to the other next two, who observe the same order in their changes, and holding the garland over her head. Which done, they deliver the same garland to the last two, who likewise observe the same order. At which, as it were by inspiration, she makes in her sleep signs of rejoicing, and holdeth up her hands to heaven. And so in their dancing vanish, carrying the garland with them. The music continues*
>
> (4. 2. SD between ll. 82 and 83)

[210] See Viswanathan 58.

[211] Pavel Drábek, *Fletcherian Dramatic Achievement: A Study in the Mature Plays of John Fletcher (1579–1625)* (Brno: Masaryk University, 2010) 146.

Although the vision has little structural significance for the play and its rather mannerist representation on the stage seems to be highly influenced by the early seventeenth century fashion of court masques,[212] its purpose in not altogether ornamental, as Geisen assumes.[213] The pantomime completes the image, gradually built in the course of the entire play, of a virtuous, pious and dignified person, who has her place in heaven: the worldly crown, of which the Queen has recently been deprived, returns on her head in the form of a symbolic halo. In this respect, Ornstein's observation seems to be pertinent that Katherine is the only properly developed character of the story, calling the rest "shallow or opaque",[214] with King Henry himself being "a Jacobean waxwork figure, one that no longer seems lifelike".[215] Given the collaborative character of the play, it is, however, debatable to what extent this characterisation is a result of Shakespeare's work or Fletcher's. Ornstein explicitly attributes it to Shakespeare, although he does not believe that the final dream scene was written by him.[216] A. C. Partridge and Cyrus Hoy, on the other hand, both independently attribute 4. 2 to Shakespeare rather than Fletcher.[217] For the purpose of our study it is, nevertheless, important that the dream scene seems to be part of a careful dramatic design, fulfilling a similar rôle as characterisational dreams in Shakespearian plays.

By extension, the masque can also be seen as a key or a guideline for the interpretation of other characters related to Katherine. Cardinal Wolsey plotted against the Queen and, despite Katherine's conciliatory words at the end, deserves little sympathy from the audience. On the other hand, the King, whose image, for obvious reasons, cannot be a negative one, praises his wife in a similar fashion as the appearances from her dream:

> [*King Henry.*] That man i'th' world who shall report he has
> A better wife, let him in naught be trusted
> For speaking false in that. Thou art alone –
> If thy rare qualities, sweet gentleness,
> Thy meekness saint-like, wife-like government,
> Obeying in commanding, and thy parts
> Sovereign and pious else could speak thee out –
> The queen of earthly queens. She's noble born,
> And like her true nobility she has
> Carried herself towards me.

[212] See Stern 32.

[213] Geisen 43: "Nie zuvor hat Shakespeare in seinen Historien so offensichtlich dekorative Szenen in den Handlungsverlauf eingefügt."

[214] Ornstein 205.

[215] Ornstein 220.

[216] Ornstein 204, fn. 2.

[217] See John Margeson, Introduction, in *Henry VIII*, by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 1–63 at 7–8.

(2. 4. 131–39)

The symbolical coronation of the discarded Queen near the end of the story, underlined by the presence of the conciliatory element of music (see the discussion of *King Lear* in section 2. 4 of the present study), thus resolves one of the plot’s main conflicts and contributes to the generally placable tone of the entire piece.

# 3 Dream Prophecies: Daily Speech, Nocturnal Knowledge[1]

Lord, Lord,
What strange things live in slumbers!

(*Sir Thomas More* 4. 2. 13f)

## 3. 1 Dreamers, Doubters and Heretics

The history of dreaming in the pre-modern and early modern Western cultural and intellectual contexts had always been one strongly marked by ambiguity, anxiety and distrust. When Homer lets Penelope give the first known Western classification of dreams (see Chapter 2. 1 of the present study), the – most probably – *ad hoc* concept of two oneiric gates[2] clearly testifies to the already established common wisdom of archaic Greeks that not all nocturnal visions can be trusted. A telling example of such a false prophecy in the Homeric canon is a "sinister dream [οὖλος ὄνειρος]" which, at the beginning of Book II of the *Iliad*, Zeus sends to Agamemnon, the King of Mycenae, in order to support the Trojan camp against the Achaeans.[3] Around the same time, Hesiod, in his *Theogony* (eighth or seventh century BC), gives an account of the origin of dreams, stressing their dark side even more than Homer: "Night bore hateful Doom and dark Fate and Death, she bore Sleep, she bore the tribes of Dreams [φῦλον Ὀνείρων] […], bedded with none of the gods".[4] Hesiod furthermore situates the house of dreams in Tartarus, "dismal and dank, that even gods shudder at",[5] connecting them with the underworld and the land of the dead, where they would remain for centuries to come.[6]

Although the post-Homeric lyric and tragic traditions each treat dreams differently, Vladimír Mikeš argues that non-scenic uses of dream metaphors in literature of the time, which are independent of a specific genre and its needs, indicate that, in the classical period, dreams were universally understood as something inconstant and elusive or

[1] The subtitle of this chapter is an allusion to Psalm 19: 2, which appeared as a motto on the title-page of *A Treatise of Dreams and Visions* by Thomas Tryon (London: Thomas Sowle, 1689).
[2] For a summary of various opinions upon the origin of the concept of two oneiric gates, see Alexandra Rozokoki, "Penelope's Dream in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*", *Classical Quarterly* 51 (2001): 1–6.
[3] Homer, *The Iliad*, 18 = 2. 8.
[4] Hesiod, *Theogony*, in *Theogony, Works and Days*, trans. M. L. West (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 3–33 at 9 = ll. 211–14.
[5] Hesiod 25 = l. 740.
[6] See Jacques Le Goff, "Rêves", in *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Fayard, 1999) 950–68 at 952.

misleading and unreal.[7] Moreover, whether true or not, dreams were often considered as a negative element opposing the beneficial powers of sleep, since they disturbed a night's rest. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope, having dreamt of Odysseus, asserts that grief is endurable if one can at least sleep every night, for sleep

> brings a forgetfulness of all things, the good and the evil things alike, when once it has wrapped men's eyelids round. But as for me – even my dreams have been evil ones [ὄνειροι κακοί], sent by some god for my distress.[8]

Despite the rather sober and naturalistic explanation of dreams in his *Republic*[9] (see below), in the *Apology of Socrates*, Plato (424–348 BC), too, lets Socrates praise the concept of a dreamless sleep:

> I think, if a man had to choose the night in which he slept so soundly as not even to dream [οὕτω κατέδαρθεν ὥστε μηδὲ ὄναρ ἰδεῖν], and compare this night with the other nights and days of his life, and had to say after consideration how many days and nights he had lived through in his whole life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that the Great King himself – let alone an ordinary man – would find those nights easy to count in contrast to the other days and nights[.][10]

This, however, did not prevent dreams from being a subject of constant human interest and scrutiny, leading to oneiromancy becoming an immensely popular activity in the classical world. As Jacques Le Goff asserts, ancient Greeks and Romans would commonly consult both "devins 'populaires'" and "véritables savants" about the contents of their dreams.[11] After all, the first mention of "some fellow good at dreams [ὀνειρόπολος]" among other diviners can already be found in Book I of Homer's *Iliad*,[12] although the meaning of the word was most probably different from the later concept of a dream interpreter.[13] Techniques developed to induce dreams through the process of incubation, connected with sacred places or temples devoted to certain gods. The most widespread of these cults was that of Asclepius, the god of medicine, who either directly healed applicants in their dreams or gave them prescriptions or medical instructions. As Mikeš notes, this vigorous cult lasted continuously from the fifth century BC to the fifth century AD, celebrated at over four hundred shrines in the Mediterranean.[14]

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[7] See Vladimír Mikeš, "Sen ve starém Řecku", in Starý and Hrdlička, 149–69 at 158.
[8] Homer, *The Odyssey*, 245 = 20. 85–87.
[9] See Plato, *Republic*, 313–14 = 571c–72b.
[10] Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, ed. and trans. Michael C. Stokes (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1997) 91 = 40d–e.
[11] Le Goff 953.
[12] Homer, *The Iliad*, 2 = 1. 63.
[13] See Mikeš, "Sen ve starém Řecku", 160.
[14] Ibid.

The belief in the connection between dreams and health gradually led to partial demythologisation and rationalisation of nocturnal visions. At the end of the fifth or the beginning of the fourth century BC, the father of Western medicine, Hippocrates, devised probably the first comprehensive scientific theory of dreams, according to which only some of them come from the gods, whilst the others originate in the nocturnal activity of the soul, indicating bodily states.[15] In the fourth century BC, Plato saw the origin of the bodily dreams in the lower, desirous portion of the mind, which, with the higher, rational part being asleep, "springs up and longs to banish sleep and go and satisfy its own instincts".[16] Unlike in Hippocrates, who considered natural dreams as a useful means of diagnosing diseases, Plato's dreams therefore have distinctively negative connotations. Plato, however, also believed that if one was self-disciplined and kept himself in a healthy state, the rational part of his soul could stay awake and be free to perceive "something in the past or present or future that it doesn't know".[17] Several decades later, Aristotle (384–322 BC) even more resolutely attributed dreams to bodily processes, defining the dream as "a presentation [φαντασία] based on the movement of sense impressions" which persisted in the receptive faculty of the soul even after the external object had departed.[18] He furthermore rejected the divine origin of prophetic dreams on the assumption that "the power of foreseeing the future and of having vivid dreams is found in persons of inferior type, which implies that God does not send their dreams".[19] With a large amount of scepticism he suggested that some dreams might presage the future either because they were the inspiration for the sleeper's waking action, out of mere coincidence, or because they were impressions coming from resonances of natural objects which prompted future events.[20]

Attempts to rationalise dreams by means of psychosomatic theories, however, ultimately gave way to the approach of the Stoics, the most influential Hellenistic school, which favoured the concept of god-sent visions. As Petr Horák maintains, the Hellenistic period represented an ideal cultural environment for any undertaking to fathom, through reason, one's fate set by divine powers, including divination from dreams.[21] Oneiromancy

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[15] Hippocrates 252 = *Regimen IV*, 87.

[16] Plato, *Republic*, 313 = 571c.

[17] Plato, *Republic*, 314 = 572a.

[18] Aristotle, *De Somniis*, in *The Parva Naturalia*, trans. J. I. Beare (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1908) 458b–462b at 462a.

[19] Aristotle, *De Divinatione per Somnum*, in *The Parva Naturalia*, 462b–464b at 463b.

[20] See Aristotle, *De Divinatione per Somnum*, 463a–b.

[21] Petr Horák, Introduction, in *Snář* [= Oneirocritica], by Artemidorus (Prague: Svoboda, 1974) 7–21 at 9–10.

was thus rehabilitated as a legitimate means of understanding one's future. Already at the end of the fourth or beginning of the third century BC, Herophilos, the founder of the medical school of Alexandria (335–280 BC), returned to the traditional typology of dreams, distinguishing between those caused by "divine instinct" (ὄνειρος θεόπνευστος), *i.e.*, sent by gods, those which had a "natural cause" (ὄνειρος φυσικος), *i.e.*, the divinatory activity of the soul, and those which were of a "constitution of mixed of both" (ὄνειρος συγκραματικος).[22] Furthermore, strong syncretical tendencies appeared to combine various older oneiric concepts into a unified system, classifying dreams according to their origin and value.[23]

As we have already observed (see Chapter 2. 1), the famous dream interpreter Artemidorus divided dreams into two main categories: ὄνειρος (for which we might use the term "dream-vision") and ἐνύπνιον (which is an ordinary "dream"). Whereas the dream, Artemidorus admitted, was clearly a product of impulses originating in the sleeper's body and mind,[24] in chapter six of Book I of his *Oneirocritica*, the author partly relativised, partly rejected Aristotle's observations that the dream-vision had always a natural cause, calling the ὄνειρος "god-sent [θεόπεμπτος]".[25] Nevertheless, Artemidorus's opinion – which itself drew from (now lost) treatises of diviners of previous generations – was not unconditionally accepted. In the first century BC, Cicero (106–43 BC) considered divination from dreams as something superstitious and arbitrary, depending solely on luck. "We sleep every night and there is scarcely ever a night when we do not dream," argued Cicero. "[T]hen do we wonder that our dreams come true sometimes [*aliquando id quod somniarimus evadere*]?"[26] He was also resolutely dismissive of any possibility of a divine origin of dreams, claiming that

> [i]f the gods did send us warnings in our sleep and for our good they would do the same for us when we are awake, especially since [...] appearances seen when we are awake are much more distinct and trustworthy than those seen in dreams.[27]

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[22] Plutarch, *Those Sentiments Concerning Nature with Which Philosophers Were Delighted*, trans. John Dowel, in *Plutarch's Morals*, Vol. 3, ed. William W. Goodwin (Boston: Little, Brown, 1878) 104–193 at 176 = 5. 2.

[23] See Mikeš, "Sen ve starém Řecku", 164.

[24] See Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 22–23 = 1. 1.

[25] Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 31 = 1. 6.

[26] Cicero, *De Divinatione*, in *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, trans. William Armistead Falconer (London: William Heinemann, 1923) 214–539 at 507 = 2. 59. 121.

[27] Cicero 513 = 2. 61. 126.

This array of various, often contradictory opinions on dreams shows what an ambiguous and unstable cultural phenomenon they represented. When, in the fourth century, Christianity became the dominant religion of the West, the anxiety and controversy surrounding them only deepened.

The primordial reason for Christianity's ambivalent attitude to dreams lay in Christian scripture itself. Although, in Numbers 12: 6, God establishes dreams as a mode of revelation, the interpretation of dreams in the Old Testament is repeatedly presented as something either futile, or even forbidden. Having had two dreams of seven years of abundance and seven years of famine, the King of Egypt complains, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it" (Gn 41: 15), upon which Joseph informs him that only "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Gn 41: 16). Similarly, when Nebuchadnezzar has his apocalyptic vision of a monumental statue, destroyed by a stone, he summons various diviners to interpret it, all of them failing (Dn 2: 10–11). Finally, Daniel faces the King to tell him that

> The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.
>
> (Dn 2: 27–28)

The authority to reveal the secrets of dreams is therefore solely God's, not humans'. If a man should disclose them, it can only be by God's permission and delegation. The Wisdom of Sirach makes it explicit that "Divinations, and soothsayings, and dreams, are vain: and the heart fancieth, as a woman's heart in travail. If they be not sent from the most High in thy visitation, set not thy heart upon them" (Ecclus 34: 5–6). To complicate things even further, the Old Testament admits the possibility of God sending false dreams to test people's faith, warning that

> If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, […] Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.
>
> (Dt 13: 1, 3)

As Le Goff maintains, the Wisdom of Sirach (mentioned above) and the Book of Ecclesiastes (which, similarly, advises that "in the multitude of dreams and many words

there are also divers vanities", Ecc 5: 7), were texts that especially pervaded mediaeval culture and sensibility.[28]

Besides this moral-theological dilemma, the early Church's resentment of dreams also sprang from more pragmatic grounds: by permitting dream revelations, the newly formed organisation would allow a direct contact of common people with God, which would diminish the Church's rôle in the believers' lives. Secondly, it was necessary to suppress various unorthodox and splinter Christian movements, which the church considered as heretical and for whose spirituality dream prophecies often played an important part (such as various Gnostic movements or Montanism). As a result of its uncertainties and anxieties about dreams, the Christian theology defined a whole new class of nocturnal visions, unknown to classical oneiric systems, which more than anything else determined the position of dreams in the Western mediaeval, and to an extent the early modern as well, world – that is, the diabolical dream.

At the beginning of the third century AD, the early ecclesiastical writer Tertullian (c. 160–c. 225) admitted that dreams could indeed be of divine origin (*a deo*)[29] and that to experience a true dream was very human in essence (*Quis autem tam extraneus humanitatis, ut non aliquam aliquando visionem fidelem senserit?*).[30] But at the same time, he also warned against daemons, who could penetrate men's houses and deceive them by visions in their (men's) very own bedrooms (*Quo nemo dubitaverit domus quoque daemoniis patere* […] *in cubiculis homines imaginibus circumveniri*).[31] However, rather than from the existence of diabolical dreams itself, the early mediaeval anxiety about nocturnal visions arose from the failure of the Christian theology of dream to give believers clear criteria by which to distinguish between the Devil's deception and divine revelation (Le Goff asserts that this failure might have been deliberate).[32] When, at the end of the sixth century, Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) complicated the previous three-fold division of dreams according to their source (God, man, and the Devil) by introducing mixed categories,[33] he concluded that, "seeing dreams do grow from such divers roots, with so much the more difficulty ought we to believe them: because it doth not easily

[28] See Le Goff 951.
[29] Tertullian, *De Anima*, ed. J. H. Waszink (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1947) 65 = 47. 2.
[30] Tertullian 63 = 46. 3.
[31] Tertullian 65 = 46. 13.
[32] See Le Goff 956.
[33] See Gregory the Great, *The Dialogues of Saint Gregory, Surnamed the Great*, trans. P[hilip] W[oodward] (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1911) 244 = 4. 48.

appear unto us, from what cause they do proceed"[34] (*Sed nimirum cum somnia tot rerum qualitatibus alternent, tanto eis credi difficilius debet, quanto et ex quo inpulsu ueniant facilius non elucet*). In spite of their possible celestial origin, Saint Gregory's follower Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636), in a similar fashion, advised that people should not put any trust in dreams (*somniis fides habenda non est*) in order not to allow Satan, appearing as the Angel of Light, to deceive someone unvigilant by chance or mislead him by means of a deceptive fallacy (*ne forte Satanas, in angelum lucis se transformans, quemlibet incautum fallat, et aliqua erroris fraude decipiat*).[35] Isidore, moreover, raised the issue of a potential danger arising from dreams originating in people's daily thoughts, claiming that whilst it was not a sin when men were deceived by a nocturnal vision, it was sinful when they summoned it by their affected thoughts (*cogitationis affectibus praeuenimur*).[36] We can, therefore, observe a tendency to make taboo even dreams with a natural origin, which are attributed almost the same status as Satanic visions. This practice tellingly illustrates the anxiety and distrust which dreams in the first centuries of the Christian era generally stirred.

Although the twenty-fourth canon of Ancyra (AD 314) condemned any form of divination and sorcery,[37] in the course of the Middle Ages, there nevertheless were privileged classes for whom dreams remained an accepted source of special knowledge. In the first place, there were saints, who, according to Gregory the Great,

> by a certain inward spiritual taste [*quodam intimo sapore*], do discern betwixt illusions [*illusiones*] and true revelations [*revelationes*], by the very voices or representations of the visions themselves: so that they know what they receive from a good spirit, and what they suffer by illusion from the wicked.[38]

As Le Goff notes, at the turn of late antiquity and early Middle Ages, such "true revelations" became a staple part of hagiographical writings. [39] An example of one might be a much-celebrated dream of Saint Monica about the future conversion of her son Augustine (354–430). In his autobiographical *Confessions* (397–398), Saint Augustine recalls that, when he got involved with the Manichaeans in his youth, his Christian mother was concerned about her son's fate and never stopped praying for his salvation. One night,

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[34] Gregory the Great, *The Dialogues*, 245 = 4. 48.
[35] Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, ed. Pierre Cazier (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998) 218 = 6. 6. 8.
[36] Isidore of Seville 220 = 6. 6. 13.
[37] See William Beveridge, *Συνοδικον* (Oxford: William Wells and Robert Scott, 1672) 399–400.
[38] Gregory the Great, *The Dialogues*, 245 = 4. 48.
[39] See Le Goff 958.

she had a dream in which she saw herself standing on a wooden rule, weeping. A radiant youth approached her and asked her about the reason of her grief, "not to learn from her, but to teach her, as is customary in visions" (*docendi, ut adsolet, non discendi gratia*). Upon hearing that "it was my [*i.e.*, Augustine's] soul's doom she was lamenting", the young man bade her rest content and showed her Augustine, standing on the rule next to her, meaning that he, too, would one day stand in faith by her side. Years later, when Augustine did indeed turn Christian, he did not doubt that his mother's consoling dream had been sent by God. "Whence came this vision unless it was that thy ears were inclined toward her heart?" confides Augustine to the Lord.[40]

Another traditional group of privileged dreamers were, of course, Christian (and, in exceptional cases, also pagan) rulers. It was, after all, the dream of the cross which Emperor Constantine (306–337) had on the night before the victorious Battle of the Milvian Bridge (AD 312) that ultimately led to the establishment of Christianity as the leading faith of the West. It is no surprise, therefore, that the royal dream is a recurrent motif in European mediaeval historiography, usually giving the sovereign a moral lesson, confirming him in his faith or helping him to make the right decisions in reigning over his country by revealing to him something about its future. The ruler's piety or some other form of divine authorisation is commonly stressed.

According to *The Annals of Fulda* (ninth century AD), for instance, the Eastern-Frankish King Louis the German (843–876) dreamt in Lent of 874 about his dead father, Emperor Louis the Pious (814–840), who was "in dire straits [*in angustiis constitutum*]", imploring his son to pray for him and save him from the purgatorial torments. "Horrified by this vision [*Hac … visione perterritus*]", the King sent letters to all monasteries in his kingdom, asking them to pray for the soul of the Emperor, who was being punished for having allowed "many things against God's law [*plurima … legi Dei contraria*]" during his reign.[41] *The Chronicle of John Worcester* (twelfth century AD) mentions a series of three "remarkable visions [*mira … somnia*]" seen by the English King Henry I (1100–1135) in 1130, in which peasants, knights and churchmen in sequence rebelled against excessive taxes, threatening the King's life.[42] Upon discussing the content of the dreams with the King on the following morning, the abbot of Winchcombe advised Henry to

[40] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Albert Cook Outler (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) 51 = 3. 11. 19.

[41] *The Annals of Fulda*, trans. Timothy Reuter (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992) 74.

[42] For a detailed discussion of Henry I's dream, see Claude Carozzi, "Die drei Stände gegen den König: Mythos, Traum, Bild", in *Träume im Mittelalter. Ikonologische Studien*, ed. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Giorgio Stabile (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989) 149–60.

"redeem his sins [*peccata redimere*]" by alms-giving.[43] The so-called *Chronicle of Zbraslav* (fourteenth century AD) tells of the Bohemian King Wenceslaus II Přemyslid (1278–1305) and his terrifying dream (*sompnium* […] *terribile*), which made the sleeper's bone marrow stiffen and almost all his vigour grow feeble (*medulla constringitur ossium et pene totus vigor elanguit sompniantis*). The dream apparition (*apparicio visionis*) showed the King the unfinished Cistercian monastery, which he had founded in the town of Zbraslav, devastated by a huge storm. Considering the dream not as a futile one (*sompnium non cassum*) but a true prophecy of some kind of evil (*verius alicuius mali preludium*), the King consulted the abbot of the monastery, who, in order to soothe the monarch, told him that dreams were vain and not a cause for concern (*vana et non curanda essent sompnia*). The author of the chronicle, however, maintains that the dream presaged the devastation of the country under the rule of Henry VI of Carinthia (1306–1310) and that King Wenceslaus surely did not lack the prophetic spirit (*rex ille spiritu prophecie nequaquam caruit*).[44]

Despite all the ecclesiastical establishment's attempts to control the experience of dreaming, and in spite of the atmosphere, generally unfriendly to the phenomenon, the fascination which dreams exercised among ordinary believers gave birth to a whole new subculture of popular mediaeval oneirocriticism, substantiated today by rich written evidence. Besides the already mentioned learned discourses on dreams, there were four main types of mediaeval literature addressing the subject from a more practical perspective: 1) dream alphabets, which determined the meaning of the dream by means of the first letter on a randomly picked page of a psalter, 2) dream-lunars, which interpreted dreams according to phases of the moon, 3) dreambooks proper, containing lists of dream symbols and their interpretations, and, after the reinvention of Aristotelian and Galenic theories, 4) physiological dreambooks, using dreams as a means of medical diagnosis.[45]

To claim theological credibility, popular mediaeval oneirocritical works were often spuriously appropriated to elements of Christian orthodoxy, be it the names of their alleged authors (e.g., *Somniale Danielis* or *Sompnile Joseph*), various Biblical events (the birth of Adam or the creation of Eve, associated with certain phases of the moon), or Christian

[43] John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, Vol. 3, ed. and trans. P. McGurk (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1998) 198–203.

[44] Peter von Zittau, *Chronicon Aulæ Regiæ*, in *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum*, Vol. 4, ed. Josef Emler (Prague: Nadání Františka Palackého, 1884) 1–337 at 67–68.

[45] See Steven R. Fischer, "Dreambooks and the Interpretation of Medieval Literary Dreams", *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 65 (1983): 1–20 at 3–6.

rituals (a prayer as a part of the process of divination or the already mentioned psalter).[46] Lynn Thorndike maintains that, in terms of the number of extant works of the period ascribed to him, Daniel was the most favourite Biblical authority on the interpretation of dreams in the Middle Ages, his popularity being so immense that it transgressed the cultural space of the Latin West and penetrated the Mohammedan mantic tradition.[47] The alphabetical list of dream topoi accredited to the Old Testament prophet, the *Somniale Danielis*, appeared first in Greek around the fourth century, to be translated into Latin three centuries later and, subsequently, into a number of vernacular languages as well, including English, French, Italian, German, Old Norse, Welsh, and Irish.[48] Although Daniel's dream manual was, in the words of Gabriel Turville-Petre, "one of the most popular books in medieval Europe",[49] its legacy was still alive in the Renaissance: there is a 1556 English edition of the dreambook,[50] which two decades after its publication found its way to the so-called Captain Cox library, a compendium of books believed to have been read by the Elizabethan middle-class;[51] furthermore, the 1576 edition of the already mentioned treatise by Thomas Hill contains a list of "Certain brief Dreames" attributed to "the wyse Solomon[,] holye Joseph, and Daniell the Prophet".[52] Kruger maintains that whereas oral tradition surely contributed to the spread and growth of mediaeval dreambooks, the number of contemporary manuscripts, plus the fact that they are in some cases included in codices of a learned character, testifies to their popularity not only among the lower classes, but also among the literate and educated – sometimes even aristocratic – population.[53]

As Kruger explains, folk oneiromancy was initially met with resistance and condemnation from the Church's side. Observing dreams was rejected by all major mediaeval law collections, ranging from Charlemagne's legal compendia (eighth and ninth centuries AD) to the *Decretum Gratiani* (twelfth century AD).[54] The *Decretum*, as the most important mediaeval compendium of canon law, makes it quite explicit that paying attention to popular dream interpretation handbooks, just like divination in the name of the

[46] See Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 9–10.
[47] See Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. 2 (New York: Columbia P, 1923) 293–94.
[48] See Kruger 11.
[49] Gabriel Turville-Petre, "Dream Symbols in Old Icelandic Literature", *Festschrift Walter Baetke*, ed. Kurt Rudolf (Weimar: Böhlau, 1966) 343–54 at 349.
[50] STC (2nd ed.) 6235.5.
[51] See Frederick J. Furnivall, *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books; or, Robert Laneham's Letter* (London: The Ballad Society, 1871) xcv.
[52] Hill, *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, sig. O2$^{v}$.
[53] See Kruger 14–15.
[54] See Kruger 11–13.

holy apostles, is unchristian and against baptism (*qui attendunt somnialia scripta, et falso in Danielis nomine intitulata, et sortes, quae dicuntur sanctorum Apostolorum,* […] *sciant, se fidem Christianam et baptismum praevaricasse*).[55] Paradoxically, around the time when the *Decretum* was compiled, a major shift in Western religious thought took place, which redefined the relationship of God and Man and also significantly influenced the issue of dreaming. As R. W. Southern asserts, Christian theology newly emancipated man from the position of the passive observer of God and Satan's fight over his soul and attributed to him a more active rôle in his own salvation.[56] "The Devil slipped out of the drama," writes Southern, "and left God and Man face to face".[57] This observation, which generally refers to Man's new position in the Christian world, might also be very well applied to the late mediaeval concept of dreams.

Indeed, whereas in the sixth and seventh centuries, Saint Gregory and Isidore of Seville rejected all oneiric experiences because some of them might be Satanic impostures, in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) approved of most dreams, claiming that

> what men commonly experience cannot be ignored. Yet all men experience at some time that their dreams have some meaning for the future [*somnia habere aliquam significationem futurorum*]. Therefore, it is useless to deny that dreams have some force for discovering the future and that it is lawful to attend them [*licitum est eis intendere*].[58]

The only dreams which were, according to Aquinas, unlawful and superstitious (*divinatio illicita et superstitiosa*) were those originating in "the disclosure by demons [*ex revelatione daemonum*], with whom a pact has been made, whether express, by invoking them, or tacit, by seeking knowledge out of human reach".[59]

We can, therefore, discern a sharp difference from the previous doctrines of the theology of dreams: the risk of the dreamer being deceived by the Devil still existed, but did not any more constitute a strong enough reason to condemn *all* dreams. As Kruger observes, with the shading of Satan and rising interest in Man, another strong tendency appeared in the course of the twelfth century towards what he calls a "somatisation" of dream theory, emphasising natural dreams and the physiology of dreaming.[60] By the early thirteenth century, Aristotle's treatises on sleeping, dreaming and the interpretation of

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[55] *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, Vol. 1, ed. Emil Ludwig Richter (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1839) 906 = 2.26.5.6.

[56] R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1953) 234–36.

[57] Southern 236.

[58] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ*, Vol. 40, ed. and trans. by the Dominican Editors (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1963) 56–57 = 2a2æ. 2. 95. 6.

[59] Aquinas XL, 58–59 = 2a2ae. 2. 95. 6.

[60] See Kruger 70–73; cf. Le Goff 960–61.

dreams, which explained dreams within the framework of the activity of the human body and soul, were translated into Latin and gained an immense scholarly attention and authority in the late Middle Ages.[61] François Berriot notes that with these new views of dreams, the Church, at least in some countries, seems to have endorsed oneirocriticism and, from the twelfth century, allowed the reproduction of popular dream interpretation manuals.[62]

When, at the turn of the fifteenth century, the Bohemian poet, chronicler and translator Laurentius de Březová (c. 1370–c. 1437) translated the tenth-century Byzantine oneirocritical manual known as the *Oneirocriticon Achmetis*[63] from Latin into Czech, he prefixed to his work a lengthy introduction in which he attempted finally to resolve the ultimate question of the mediaeval theology of dreams, whether it is suitable for Christian people to believe the dream vision and its interpretations.[64] The text of the introduction resembles not so much a learned treatise as an apology for dreams in a Christian moral-theological context. In fact, it has very little to do with the dreambook itself and concludes with a typology of dreams which perfectly reflects the mainstream tendencies of late mediaeval dream theories: Laurentius first mentions dreams coming 1) from a disease or some other bodily impulses, moving to those which are 2) from thoughts and 3) from the revelation of God or saints, to mention finally 4) visions from the devil.[65]

Paying most attention to the first group of dreams (around two manuscript pages), Laurentius certified that the first three kinds of dream are to be believed without sin.[66] The Bohemian author dedicated a very limited space to the fourth kind (ten lines), in which he, with no particular theological or moral emphasis, informs us that such a vision must not be given credence by any man, especially a Christian.[67] Unlike his ecclesiastical predecessors,

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[61] See Kruger 84.

[62] François Berriot, “Clés des songes françaises à la Renaissance”, in *Le songe à la Renaissance*, ed. Françoise Charpentier (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 1990) 21–31 at 21.

[63] For the English version of the *Oneirocrition*, see Achmet ibn Sirin [attributed to], *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet: A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams*, ed. Steven M. Oberhelman (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech UP, 1991). For a detailed discussion of the text, see Maria Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[64] See Laurentius de Březová, *Somniarium Slaidae* (ms. MK 14, Moravian Library, Brno, Czech Republic) fol. 1[a]. Another surviving mediaeval manuscript of the work is deposited in the Moravian Archive in Brno, Czech Republic, under the call sig. G 10, 412. For a conflated transcription of the Czech dreambook, see Vavřinec z Březové, *Kniehy snového vykládanie*, ed. Jan Skutil, *Vlastivědná ročenka Okresního archívu Blansko* 1974: 53–66; 1974/1975: 46–111; 1975: 35–54. For a detailed commentary upon the mediaeval Czech version of the *Oneirocriticon*, see Filip Krajník and Jana Kolářová, “Prolegomena k české středověké verzi Achmetova *Oneirokritikon*, její pražské latinské předloze a řeckému originálu”, *Listy filologické/Folia philologica* 135 (2012): 287–331.

[65] See Laurentius fols. 21[a]–23[a].

[66] See Laurentius fol. 22[a].

[67] Laurentius fol. 22[b]: “[T]akovému vidění neslušie nikoli věřiti nižádnému člověku, a zvláště křěstianskému.”

Laurentius gives his readers (the original dedicatee of the translation was probably someone from the court of the German King Wenceslaus [1376–1419], if not the King himself)[68] a very easy criterion according to which a Satanic illusion could be recognised: when a person, beautiful or ugly, ecclesiastical or profane, advises or orders something evil or seeks to prevent the dreamer from doing something good.[69]

Although the anxiety surrounding dreams, typical of the entire Middle Ages, is still discernible in the work written at the turn of the period, it almost seems as if the mediaeval epoch ended with a consensus that dreams were generally benign and dream interpretation deserved endorsement, which laid the ground for a calm and rational examination of oneiric phenomena, including dream prophecies, in the era of humanism. As Simone Perrier notes, however, the early modern world still struggled with the mediaeval "sorcerous" heritage, opposing the attempts to explain dreams purely by reason.[70]

The best example of the tendency to associate dreaming with sorcerous practices is *Malleus Maleficarum* by Heinrich Kramer (c. 1430–1505) and Jacob Sprenger (1436–1495), a handbook for pursuing witchcraft (first published in 1487). In spite of being, in the words of the Catholic historian Radomír Malý, a primitive and superstitious treatise,[71] the work enjoyed an immense popularity in the early modern period, reaching its twenty-ninth edition in 1669. In Part I, Question 16, dealing with various forms of superstition and works of witches, Kramer and Sprenger agree with Thomas Aquinas that dreams originating in divine revelations and bodily processes are lawful. They also stress, however, that "such dreams are trivial compared to the ones superstitiously practised by sorceresses [*a maleficis supersticiose obseruata*]",[72] and continue to describe how sleeping witches are able, through the pact with daemons, to "perceive only in the imagination [*imaginarie cernere*] the crimes that are being committed by their fellow-sorceresses",[73] or, "if they wish to know certain secrets on behalf of themselves or of other people, they

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[68] See Marie Bláhová, "Spuren des arabischen Wissens im mittelalterlichen Böhmen", in *Wissen über Grenzen, Arabisches Wissen und lateinisches Mittelalter*, ed. Andreas Speer and Lydia Wegener (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006) 133–42 at 137.

[69] Laurentius de Březová, MK 14, fols. 22[b]–23[a]: "Kdyžto ukáže sě osoba krásná nebo škaredá, duchovnie nebo svěcká, radiec nebo véléc co zlého a nebo brániec dobrého. […] Poňadž neslušie to činiti, neslušie tomu věřiti."

[70] Simone Perrier, "La problématique du songe à la Renaissance: la norme et les marges", in *Le songe à la Renaissance*, 13–19 at 15.

[71] Radomír Malý, "Pravda a lež o čarodějnických procesech", *Immaculata* 5: 6 (2000): 14–15 at 15.

[72] Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Vol. 2, ed. and trans. Christopher Mackay (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006) 197 = 1. 13. 79B.

[73] Ibid.

are informed by the daemons through dreams [*a demonibus per somnia instruuntur*]".[74] Moreover, in Question 7 of the same part, the Dominican inquisitors suggest that basically any dream might be what they call an "internal temptation [*interior tentatio*]" of the daemon, even a natural one:

> [W]hat happens in the case of sleeping people who are asleep in terms of the apparitions of dreams from spirits [*de apparitionibus somniorum ex spirituum*], that is, of images deposited in places of preservation […] is the result of a natural movement in location on account of the blood and humors being set into motion[.] […] This can also happen as the result of a similar motion caused by demons [*per demones procurato*], in the case not only of people who are asleep but also of ones who are awake, in whom the demons can direct and set into motion the internal spirits and humors […] so that this person can imagine certain things [*vt res aliquas habeat talis imaginare*].[75]

Thus, with the help of the language and sophistication of rational classical and late mediaeval dream theories, Christians were once more scared back into early mediaeval doubts and anxieties, having been given no guidance in the highly suspicious occult territory.

There were, of course, less radical opinions on the matter as well. A century after Kramer and Sprenger, Reginald Scot expressed a considerable scepticism about diabolical dreams, claiming that

> [t]hose which in these dayes are called Magical or Diabolical Dreams, may rather be called Melancholical. For out of that black vapor in sleep, through Dreams appeareth (as *Aristotle* saith) some horrible thing, and as it were the image of an ugly Devil: sometimes also other terrible visions, imaginations, counsels, and practises.[76]

This, however, does not mean that his attitude to oneirocriticism was a favourable one. Scot explicitly rejected folk oneiromancy, calling witches, whom Elizabethans commonly consulted about the contents of their dreams,[77] frauds and "worthy of great punishment", because they asserted "such Divine power as only belongeth to God".[78] Studying the content of dreams was, according to Scot, a "time vainly employed", "folly and vanity".[79] Around the same time as Scot's treatise, a series of even stricter condemnations of the interpretation of dreams came from the Catholic Church's official hierarchy: the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (1566) names, among other heretics, "those who give credit to dreams [*qui somniis … fidem habent*]" as violators of the first commandment,[80] and the

[74] Kramer and Sprenger II, 197 = 1. 13. 79C.
[75] Kramer and Sprenger II, 129–30 = 1.7.48B–C.
[76] Scot 101. (Original italics.)
[77] See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1971 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980) 153.
[78] Scot 99.
[79] Scot 100.
[80] Pius V [published by command of], *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. J. Donovan (Baltimore: Lucas Brothers, 1829) 245.

1586 bull of Pope Sixtus V (1585–1590), *Coeli et terrae Creator Deus*, outlaws any form of divination, declaring that the future can only be known by God alone.[81]

Any early modern author on dreams and dream interpretation, therefore, found himself caught in a dilemma. Despite the teaching of Aristotle, which was, as Angus Gowland stresses, "[t]he most important source for learned theories of dreaming in the Renaissance",[82] denying the divine origin of dreams laid the writer open to the accusation of heterodoxy. An example of such a radical naturalistic approach might be the Italian free-thinker Lucilio Vanini (1585–1619), executed for atheism and blasphemy in 1619. In his dialogue *De Insomniis* (1616), Vanini explained the origin of nocturnal visions in purely materialistic terms, referring to Aristotelian lore.[83] On the other hand, as Browne stresses, any strong emphasis on supernatural agents of dreams risked attracting the charge of having dealings with devils.[84] The already mentioned Italian polymath Girolamo Cardano, for instance, was careful not to dismiss the possibility of the divine origin of prophetic dreams altogether (*Non negaverim in quibusdam huismodi idola* [literal premonitory dreams] *a Diis*), but at the same time considered the notion that our dreams should be attributed to God or daemons as foolish, suggesting that the fruit of dreams was natural and at man's full disposal (*ita stultum est credere somnia nobis a diis aut daemonibus immitti, quorum tota seges naturalis est, et nobis ampliter concessa*). For Cardano, whose own life was marked by several prophetic visions, divine dreams were miracles and as such surpassed the area of dream interpretation (*miracula sunt, et extra artis considerationem*).[85]

To a certain extent similar tendencies can be discerned in literature on the topic published in early modern England, where the status of mantic dreams was even more problematic than in Catholic countries. The miracles which Cardano talks about, Keith Thomas asserts, contradicted an ecclesiastical position, as maintained by at least part of the Church of England, namely that "the Reformation brought an end to miracles" and that "Christians now had all the revelation they needed".[86] Anglican priests such as Thomas Adams (1583–1653) stressed the possibility of dreams being "the mere illusion of Satan:

[81] For a summary and discussion of the bull, see Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. 4 (New York: Columbia P, 1941) 156–57.

[82] Gowland 53.

[83] See Giulio Cesare Vanini, "De Insomniis", in *De Admirandis Naturæ Reginæ Deæque Mortalium Arcanis* (Paris: Adrian Perier, 1616) 480–95. For the discussion of Vanini's views of dreaming, see Gowland 92–95.

[84] See Alice Browne, "Girolamo Cardano's *Somniorum Synesiorum Libri IIII*", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 41 (1979): 123–35 at 126.

[85] Cardano II, 480 = 2. 18.

[86] Keith Thomas 151.

whom God once suffered to be a lying spirit in the mouth of four hundred prophets”[87] and maintained that “superstitious Papists are still full of these [*i.e.*, supposedly revelatory] dreams; and find out more mysteries in their sleep than they can well expound waking”.[88] The Puritan theologian William Perkins (1558–1602) explicitly stated that Holy Scripture, not dream prophecies, was the guide which believers should observe, claiming that “[w]ee haue the bookes of the olde and new Testament to be our direction[.] […] In these daies we must not looke to be taught by visions and dreames”.[89] The only admissible consideration of dreams in the Protestant view was to learn through them about the nature and inclinations of oneself, since, as Adams worded it, “not future event, but present condition may thus be learned”.[90]

It is not, therefore, surprising that English authors preferred an explanation for dream prophecies other than divine inspiration, be it *bona fide* or for purely pragmatic reasons. In the dedicatory epistle of his dreambook, Thomas Hill asserted that true (*i.e.*, prophetic) dreams were only seen by “suche, whose spirites are occupyed with no irrationall imaginations, nor ouercharged with the burthen of meate or drinckes, or superfluous humors, nor geuen to any other bodelie pleasures”.[91] Despite Hill’s mentioning Biblical prophets as examples, the link between the ability to interpret dreams and divine powers is not very explicit. On the other hand, the author suggested that “who that knoweth rightlye to iudge these, understandeth a great part of wisedom, and they which iudge of the same, haue a sure and perfite Arte”.[92] To have prophetic dreams and to understand them was, therefore, a *natural* (albeit rare and special) *talent*, rather than any supernatural intervention. Christopher Langton was, in his already mentioned medical handbook, even more explicit about this concept, distinguishing between the kind of dreams “the which prophecieth of thynges to come, by diuine power”,[93] and the one which

> foreseeth thynges to cumme, but not be any diuine power for euery man as he hath a good tempered bodye & as he hath peculier gyftes, and properties of nature, before other men: as one man is better skilled, in musicke then an other, & an other more nimble to clyme than he, so many by a peculyar gyfte of nature, haue dreames that declare thynges to come by allegories and prouerbes.[94]

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[87] Thomas Adams, “The Way Home”, *The Works of Thomas Adams*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1862) 14–23 at 16.

[88] Adams 16.

[89] William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles* (Cambridge: John Legatt, 1595) 222.

[90] Adams 17.

[91] Hill, *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, sig. A2$^{r–v}$. (Contractions expanded.)

[92] Hill, *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, sig. A2$^{v}$. (Contraction expanded.)

[93] Langton fol. lxxxix$^{v}$.

[94] Langton fol. lxxxviii$^{r}$.

Needless to say, the natural prophetic dreams are given significantly more space in Langton's discussion than the divine ones.

It seems that popular dream interpretation was considered as a relatively benign form of oneiromancy, and as such tolerated in early modern England. Thomas writes that observing dreams was part of Elizabethans' everyday life, since dreams "helped men to take decisions, and gave expression to their hopes and fears".[95] The official Protestant hierarchy, perhaps with the exception of Puritans,[96] had most probably no real interest in combating such popular practices, especially when they were based on Biblical precedents. An entirely different issue, however, were excesses in the form of thousands of self-proclaimed dream prophecies which appeared during the period of Civil Wars and Interregnum, often containing a strong political appeal.[97] Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) expressed his displeasure over alleged prophecies of the time and fiercely attacked those obeying not the Church and the Sovereign, but rather their own dreams and strange prophets, claiming that they effectively help in "destroying all laws, both divine, and humane, reduce all Order, Government, and Society, to the first Chaos of Violence, and Civill Warre".[98] Another aspect of the disintegration of secular and religious authority and the ultimate fall of the monarchy in the first half of the seventeenth century was, as Janine Rivière notes, the rise of popular millenarianism and religious sectarism, expressed in a number of pamphlets containing political and religious prophecies.[99] A New England pastor John Wilson (1591–1667), in his sermon *Against the Dreams and Dreamers of This Generation* (1665), referred to the abundance of dreams in new sects coming from England, complaining that "[t]here are many Dreamers in these times, the Quaker hath his Dreams, and the Seeker hath his Dreams, and I cannot reckon up all of them: and one Dream doth beget another, but the Lord doth testifie against them all".[100] In his view, the modern dreamers led the people into sin and apostasy, and he commented upon them

[95] Keith Thomas 153.

[96] Even among Puritans we might find individuals in favour of dreams. In 1658, the Puritan minister Philip Goodwin (d. 1699) published a dream treatise entitled *The Mystery of Dreames, Historically Discoursed* (1658), in which he advocated the consideration of dreams as a Christian practice.

[97] See Janine Rivière, "'Vision of the Night': The Reform of Popular Dream Beliefs in Early-Modern England", *Parergon* 20 (2003): 109–38.

[98] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Vol. 2, ed. G. A. J. Rogers and Karl Schuhmann (Bristol: Thoemmes Continuum, 2003) 343 = 3. 36.

[99] See Rivière 120ff.

[100] John Wilson, *A Seasonable Watch-Word unto Christians Against the Dreams & Dreamers of This Generation* (Cambridge: S. Green and S. Green, 1677) 8.

harshly, saying that “it is a very lamentable thing to see that any such Dreamers should arise […] that trouble the Churches of God”.[101]

Rivière suggests that, in the course of the seventeenth century, there was a programme of English intellectual elites aiming at the demystification of dreams and the consequent disqualification of all popular prophecies, which were considered as dangerous to the State and Church. The reformers, according to Rivière, called for “cultural reform and the prevention of future civil wars”[102] – a desire which ultimately led them to “present an increasingly sceptical view of dreams as forms of divine, or magical phenomena”.[103] The process of the significative dream’s loss of prestige had, however, started much earlier, and was by no means restricted to England. In 1520, when the Spanish humanist (and author of the extensive commentary upon Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*) Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540), wanted to deliver a lecture on the topic at the University of Louvain and asked for official permission, he recalled that “[a]s soon as the rector and certain other deputies heard ‘dream,’ they burst into laughter”. Vives was of the opinion that “when they heard a reference to dreaming, that beloved pastime in which they take such great delight [*delitias suas, in quo tanta cum voluptate versantur*], a rush of hilarity overcame them”.[104] There are signs that in sixteenth-century England, too, the examination of dreams was accompanied by scepticism, and possibly also laughter. In the late 1550s, Thomas Hill complained that “ther be so few parsons that see true Dreames, and fewer which understande or obserue them, yea and most few which can interpret them, therefore of this, is the arte now come into a contempt with most persons”[105] – an observation similar to one by Philip Goodwin a century later, who, in the epistle to the readers of his dream treatise, admitted that “the *Subject-Matter* of this book (which discoursing the HISTORY and MYSTERY of DREAMES) some men may imagine *useless*, a judging both mine and other mens *Study* of this present *Point* to be *paines* to no purpose, *&c*.”[106]

One of the most famous Elizabethan sceptics about dreams as a source of any special knowledge, whom Goodwin would surely have included among “some men” thinking his work “useless”, was Shakespeare’s fellow playwright and pamphleteer

[101] Wilson 4.
[102] Rivière 126.
[103] Rivière 137.
[104] Edward V. George, Introduction, in *Somnium et Vigilia in Somnium Scipionis (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio)*, by Juan Luis Vives (Greenwood, SC: Attic P, 1989) xxxviii. I am grateful to Dr. Gowland for bringing this anecdote to my attention.
[105] Hill, *The Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, sig. A3$^v$. (Contraction expanded.)
[106] Philip Goodwin, *The Mystery of Dreames, Historically Discoursed* (London: A.M. for Francis Tyton, 1658) sig. A3$^v$. (Original italics.)

Thomas Nashe (1567–c. 1601). In his light-hearted 1594 treatise *The Terrors of the Night, or, A Discourse of Apparitions*, Nashe subjected the interpretation of dreams to harsh criticism. To his mind, a dream was "nothing els but a bubling scum or froath of the fancie, which the day hath left vndigested",[107] asserting that there was "[n]o such figure of the first Chaos whereout the world was extraught, as our dreams in the night".[108] Although Nashe admitted that "Phisitions by dreames may better discerne the distemperature of their pale clients than either by vrine or ordure",[109] and did not deny the existence of visions in the past, "extraordinarily sent from heauen to foreshew the translation of Monarchies",[110] he only had words of contempt and mockery for popular oneiromancy:

> What sense is there that the yoalke of an egge should signifie gold, or dreaming of Beares, or fire, or water, debate and anger, that euery thing must bee interpreted backward as Witches say their Pater-noster, good being the character of bad, and bad of good?[111]

Readers who would, nevertheless, "harken any more after Dreames" were referred to

> *Artimidorus* [sic], *Synesius*, & *Cardan*, with many other which I haue heard by their names, but I thanke God had neuer the plodding patience to reade, for if they bee no better than some of them I haue perused, euery weatherwise old wife might write better.[112]

From Nashe's words, it is, however, discernible that, apart from genuine disbelief in prognosticatory dreams, his fierce judgement was at least partly motivated by what we might call intellectual snobbery. Whereas Hill, when referring to great authorities on dream interpretation, cited Biblical prophets Joseph and Daniel, intimately known to his readers, Nashe rather mentioned Cyrus, Pompey, Caesar and other, more or less obscure, names of ancient history. While Reginald Scot gave a "vaine treatise, set out by Thomas Hill Londoner" as an example of popular dreambooks,[113] Nashe was silent about the author of two successful domestic dream interpretation manuals and preferred to mention works which were not available in English at the time. Moreover, Nashe's contempt was not limited to oneirocriticism, but was aimed at all forms of popular divination, such as physiognomy or palmistry, which he called "impostures".[114] It is evident that Nashe's condemnation of the observation of dreams has to be taken as a judgement of a self-claimed member of the educated elite (Nashe had a bachelor's degree from Cambridge),

[107] Thomas Nashe, *The Terrors of the Night*, in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, Vol. 1, ed. F. P. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958) 337–86 at 355.
[108] Nashe 356.
[109] Nashe 368.
[110] Nashe 362.
[111] Nashe 361.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Scot 180.
[114] Nashe 370.

who wished to disavow himself ostentatiously of the popular entertainment of the lower classes.

However, although references to significative dreams kept appearing in seventeenth-century English commonplace books,[115] it seems that from the end of the sixteenth century their credit did indeed fade quickly. As Mary Baine Campbell records, when Dorothy Osborne (1627–1695), in the early 1650s, mentioned dreams in love letters to her later husband, Sir William Temple (1628–1699), she never forgot to dismiss the topic, considering, in Campbell's words, even private correspondence as "too elevated a genre to include this junk".[116] Alice Browne has written perceptively about René Descartes (1596–1650) and the famous series of three dreams which he had on the night of 10–11 November 1619.[117] Whereas the youthful Descartes, going through personal, intellectual and spiritual crises, yearned for revelatory dreams in order to find a direction for his shapeless future and, having finally experienced them, took pains to set them down in writing and interpret them, all his later references to dream phenomena were, Browne observes, "thoroughly naturalistic, assimilating them to other deceptions of the senses".[118] Perhaps, unlike his older colleague Cardano, who a century earlier recorded his supposedly meaningful dreams in both the *Somniorum Synesiorum* and his later autobiography, Descartes ultimately reached the mainstream conclusion of the time that "there is no certaintie in dreames", as Nashe worded it.[119]

From this brief and by no means exhaustive outline of the history of dreaming as a social phenomenon, it is clear that dreams were always surrounded by anxiety, doubts and controversy. From the ancient period, competing opinions held that nocturnal visions were able to reveal the dreamer's personal future, or that they were nothing more than echoes of his waking thoughts. We can also claim that when Shakespeare's dramatic career started, the belief in the meaningful nature of dreams still enjoyed significant popularity. Any dramatist of the time, as well as any theatregoer, must have been aware of the vivid

[115] See Katharine Hodgkin, "Dreaming Meanings, Some Early-modern Dream Thoughts", in *Reading the Early-modern Dream*, 109–24 at 104. For a discussion of an early seventeenth century commonplace book containing a catalogue of dream prognostics, see Jeffrey Masten, "The Interpretation of Dreams, Circa 1610", in *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early-modern Culture*, ed. Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor (New York: Routledge, 2000) 157–85.

[116] Mary Baine Campbell, "Dreaming, Motion, Meaning: Oneiric Transport in Seventeenth-Century Europe", in *Reading the Early-modern Dream: The Terrors of the Night*, 15–30 at 27.

[117] Apart from Browne's study, which also gives a full account of them, Descartes's dreams have recently been discussed by Campbell (see pp. 22–27) or in Karel Thein, "Descartovy sny", in *Spánek a sny*, 241–55.

[118] Alice Browne, "Descartes's Dreams", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977): 256–73 at 259.

[119] Nashe 372.

discussion which dream phenomena provoked and, it might be assumed, readily connected fictional representations of dream with a rich, centuries-long tradition of oneiric lore, which constituted not only his personal tenets, but also the entire early modern society's cultural awareness. The sensitivity of the early modern theatregoer to dramatic dreams and the value he attached to them were, therefore, of a different nature to that of modern Western spectators, whose views of dreaming are predominantly formed by Freudian and post-Freudian learning. Prognosticatory dreams as a literary topos were thus able to contribute effectively to the design and dramaturgy of early modern plays in the same way as "sleeping on stage" or dreams elucidating a character's true nature did.

In the following discussion, we will focus on the various treatments of the prophetic dream in the Shakespeare dramatic canon. We will attempt to determine the rôles which these dreams fulfil in individual plays' designs and whether and how these depend on a specific dramatic genre or the dramatist's creative period. Where relevant, parallels from works of other playwrights of the time will also be discussed.

## 3. 2 Shakespeare's Early Nocturnal Warnings

It appears that in the early 1590s, around the time that Shakespeare's dramatic career started, dream prophecies were for some reason a technical device frequently employed in English popular drama. Pavel Drábek, who has defined a group of five plays of the period as the distinct subgenre of the "Elizabethan dream play",[120] assumes that the Elizabethan playwrights' liking of dreams might have been one of the fashionable waves in early modern English drama, similar to Machiavel and magician plays in the late 1580s, craftsmen and chastity plays in the first years of the 1600s, or witchcraft plays around 1605. Whether Shakespeare stood at the centre of the subgenre from the beginning, or whether it appeared independently of him and he only employed a popular device of the time, is impossible to say with certainty. Drábek, however, finds it "particularly surprising" that the dream plays of the early nineties indeed revolve around the early Shakespeare; similarly, M. C. Brandbrook, although in a slightly different context, attributes to

[120] Pavel Drábek, "'My Dreams Presage Too True': Dreams as Dramatic Device in Elizabethan Drama", in *Shakespeare Mania. A Festschrift to Honour Professor Andrzej Żurowski on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Anna Cetera (Warsaw: WUW, 2013). (Forthcoming.) The five plays are Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and the apocryphal *Arden of Faversham* and *Sir Thomas More*. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Drábek for providing me with the typescript of his essay.

Shakespeare a primacy in re-inventing certain dramatic aspects of the mediaeval dream for the early modern stage.[121]

The first Shakespeare play to make use of the prophetic dream as a dramatic device is *2 Henry VI*, already discussed in the previous chapter. In the exchange between Duke Humphrey and his wife Eleanor, the Duke gives an account of his anxious nocturnal experience:

> *Gloucester.* Methought this staff, mine office-badge in court,
> Was broke in twain – by whom I have forgot,
> But, as I think, it was th' Cardinal –
> And on the pieces of the broken wand
> Were placed the heads of Edmund, Duke of Somerset,
> And William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk.
> This was my dream – what it doth bode, God knows.
> (1.2.25–31)

Eleanor's response is ready and smart, as far as her own scheme is concerned. Eager to tell her husband her own dream and push forward her ambitions (see Chapter 2. 7 of the present study), the Duchess quickly soothes Humphrey by explaining that "this was nothing but an argument / That he that breaks a stick of Gloucester's grove / Shall lose his head for his presumption" (ll. 32–34). By lulling the Duke into a false sense of security, Eleanor follows the pattern of mediaeval mantic dreams, known in English literature mainly through Chauntecleer and Pertelote's debate over the credibility of dreams in Chaucer's "The Nun's Priest's Tale", according to which an obvious warning is misinterpreted or spurned and the person concerned remains oblivious of ensuing danger. Stewart tracks the revival of this convention on the early modern English stage down to the early Elizabethan classical morality *Appius and Virginia* (p. 1576), attributed to Richard Bower, in which Virginius, father to the title character Virginia, has an ominous dream warning him against the judge Appius's vicious scheme to seduce his daughter. Virginius, however, dismisses the warning as "the old wive's tale",[122] which ultimately leads to Virginia's death.[123]

Perhaps a more direct, and more elaborated, precursor of the dream in Shakespeare's play was the tragedy *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*, written in the late 1580s by Robert Greene, who in the early nineties famously accused Shakespeare of

[121] See Branbrook 85.
[122] *Appius and Virginia*, in *A Select Collection of Old English Plays*, Vol. 4, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874) 105–55 at 139.
[123] See Stewart, "The Misunderstood Dreams", 201.

plagiarism.[124] In one scene, Solyma, sister to Sultan Solimus and wife to the imperial councillor Mustaffa, begs her husband to fly from the imperial court, because she had had an ominous dream the previous night. Her words, however, are only met with mockery:

> [*Solyma.*] This night when fair Lucina's shining wain
> Was past the chair of bright Cassiopei,
> A fearful vision appeared to me.
> Methought, Mustaffa, I beheld thy neck
> (So often folded in my loving arms)
> In foul disgrace of bassa's fair degree,
> With a vile halter basely compassèd;
> And while I poured my tears on thy dead corpse,
> A greedy lion with wide gaping throat
> Seized on my trembling body with his feet
> And in a moment rent me all to nought!
> Fly, sweet Mustaffa, or we be but dead!
> *Mustaffa.* Why should we fly, beauteous Solyma,
> Moved by a vain and a fantastic dream?
> […]
> Come, come, my joy; return again with me
> And banish hence these melancholy thoughts.
> (sc. 23, ll. 123–36, 140f)[125]

The audience, however, know that Solyma's worries are substantiated, since the Sultan (who in Scene 1 indeed compares himself to a lion) wants to strangle his brother-in-law. The murders of both Mustaffa and Solyma, in this particular order, take place in the following scene, just as Solyma foresaw.

If we return to the oneiric episode of *2 Henry VI*, however, we might discern that, despite surface similarities, Shakespeare's employment of the topos is in some aspects significantly different from his predecessors'. Carol Schreier Rupprecht has drawn attention to the symbolical nature of the Duke's dream, very different from the Duchess's literal vision. Especially the symbol of the staff, Rupprecht observes, takes various forms in the course of the play and pervades the entire dramatic narrative.[126] What Rupprecht (as well as Drábek, who asserts that realistically, Humphrey's dream "cannot be taken too seriously, of course") fails to recognise is a very literal message behind the dream's symbolism, which elevates the dramatic convention of prophetic dreams from a merely episodic element, known from older Elizabethan plays, to an ingenious structural device,

[124] For a hypothesis that Shakespeare knew Greene's play and used it as one of the sources for *King Lear*, see Daniel J. Vitkus, Introduction, in *Three Turk Plays from Early-modern England* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000) 1–53 at 19.

[125] Robert Greene, *Selimus, Emperor of the Turks*, in *Three Turk Plays*, ed. Daniel J. Vitkus (New York: Columbia UP, 2000) 55–147.

[126] See Rupprecht, "The Drama of History and Prophecy", 218.

contributing to the unity of parts two and three of the saga[127] and significantly shaping the atmosphere of the work.

Humphrey's dream indeed makes use of some established oneiric images. The motif of the staff was, according to the dreambooks of the time, connected with the loss of a beloved and reliable servant[128] or pain or weakness (*Baculum habere ambulando: dolorem vel infirmitatem signat*).[129] Both of these interpretations are theoretically applicable to the plot of the play, especially in the light of Gloucester's proclamation that, by throwing him away, the King also throws away "his crutch / Before his legs be firm to bear his body" (3. 1. 189f). The broken staff, however, has also a more mundane and, ultimately, more obvious meaning, since it was a custom for court officials to break their staff of office over the coffin of the deceased King. That Elizabethans were familiar with this connotation might be demonstrated with Act 2, Scene 2 of the anonymous history *Thomas of Woodstock*, written around the same time as *2 Henry VI*, in which Woodstock demonstratively breaks his staff before King Richard II, thus effectively rejecting the latter's legitimacy. The symbol in Humphrey's dream therefore indicates that the prophecy is less concerned with the Duke's personal fate and rather presages both the political and physical end of Henry VI, initiated in *2 Henry VI* and completed in *3 Henry VI*.

It is, nevertheless, of great dramatic significance that it is the good duke who has the vision and it is his staff that appears in it. The image of Humphrey of Lancaster in the play is not solely one of a just and pious character, as we have observed, but also as the only noble strong enough to oppose the conspirators from the court and stand between them and the weak king. To borrow Robert Ornstein's rather expressive words, Gloucester "protects the realm from their [*i.e.*, the conspirators'] predatory appetites".[130] The predators indeed occur in the Duke's dream – not as murderers of the dreamer, as we might expect, but as an imminent threat to the kingdom. Gloucester's misunderstanding of his dream and his inability to react to it surpass the personal tragedy of his death, and leave vast political implications. The chain of deaths of the Protector in 3. 1 and the conspirators in 3. 2 (the Cardinal), 4. 1 (Suffolk, decapitated), and 5. 2 (Somerset, killed in a battle, his head again exposed in 1. 1 of *3 Henry VI*) fulfils the prediction of Richard of York that the plotters

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[127] As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, these two parts may have originally formed a duology, to which what we now know as *Part One* was *ex post* added.

[128] Achmet ibn Sirin [attributed to], *Achmetis F. Seirim Oneirocritica*, 189: *Si videre visus fuerit baculum suum fractum, vel fissum: si rex est, dilectum sibi validúmque seruum amittet. [S]i plebeius, amittet hominem, cui maximè fidebat.*

[129] Daniel the Prophet [attributed to], *The Complete Medieval Dreambook: A Multilingual, Alphabetical Somnia Danielis Collation*, ed. Steven R. Fisher (Bern: Peter Lang, 1982) 138.

[130] Ornstein 43.

will find their death snaring "the shepherd of the flock, / That virtuous prince, the good Duke Humphrey" (2. 2. 73f). With the entire opposition slain, the Duke of York can finally claim the throne. The Wars of the Roses, which will shape the third and fourth parts of the tetralogy, have begun.

Whereas the dream of Solyma merely creates short dramatic suspense and prepares the audience for the imminent tragedy, Shakespeare's use of the motif is clearly more ambitious. Its contents summarise the political *status quo* in the country and foreshadow the chaos and atrocities which the kingdom will be plunged into and which transcend the space of one play. At the same time, however, the dream contributes to the immediate image of the Duke. We have observed that the Duchess's false vision primarily reflects her ambitions and tendencies, but also ironically presages her ultimate fall. The primary function of Gloucester's dream is to anticipate the future development of the plot, but it also shows the main concerns of the dreamer, which are not his personal fate, but the well-being of the King and his realm.

*Thomas of Woodstock* (which may have inspired Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*, or may have itself been inspired by it)[131] contains a similar situation. When the Duchess of Gloucester is about to leave the Duke to attend the dying Queen Anne of Bohemia, she informs her husband that she would rather stay with him, since "Never so fearful were [her] dreams till now" (4. 2. 11). Then she confides to the Duke the contents of her vision, according to which the Duke was surrounded by a pack of wolves led by an angry lion, which ultimately slew both Thomas and the flock of sheep which defended him (ll. 18–27). Gloucester follows the standard pattern, calling his wife foolish and telling her to "Take comfort then, all dreams are contrary" (l. 17). The spectators, however, know about the King's plans to have the Duke arrested and disposed of in Calais (and probably also remember the earlier identification of the King with a roaring lion in 2. 1).[132] For the audience, the Duchess's dream is a clear premonition of danger. When, later on, the Duke is indeed captured and escorted to Calais, he receives a second mysterious warning. The ghosts of Edward, the Black Prince, and King Edward III visit him in his sleep just as the ghosts of Richard III's victims visit the latter on the night before the Battle of the Bosworth

[131] Although there are numerous parallels between *Woodstock* and *2 Henry VI*, especially in the treatment of the two Dukes of Gloucester, and although *Woodstock* almost certainly influenced Shakespeare's *Richard II*, its relation to the older Shakespeare play remains inconclusive (see Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, Introduction, in *Thomas of Woodstock, or Richard the Second, Part One* [Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002] 1–46 at 4–8).

[132] Cf. Achmet ibn Sirin [attributed to], *Achmetis F. Seirim Oneirocritica*, 247: *Leo regis ad personam refertur.*

Field, and bid the Duke of Gloucester to save his life and flee. The frightened Gloucester wakes up and starts praying to God and angels to protect him, but again hesitates to believe his dream, calling it "but [his] fancy" (5. 1. 111). Several moments later, two murderers sent by King Richard enter the room and strangle the defenceless Duke with a towel.

Since the play's main concern is the fortunes of "plain Thomas" of Woodstock, with his death marking the apex of the story, it is logical that the Duchess's oneiric prophecy has a more personal character than Duke Humphrey's political dream of *2 Henry VI*. Even the dream's position within the play's *sujet* seems to be more traditional and episodic: the King's scheme is revealed in 4. 1, the nocturnal warning takes place in 4. 2, and the Duke is arrested and "led to [his] death", as he himself calls it (4. 2. 196), at the end of the same scene. In the case of Duke Humphrey, the dream takes place in the exposition of the play and the audience have to wait two acts for the first part of its fulfilment. Yet, in the second dream of *Thomas of Woodstock* (the ghosts' visitation of the Duke), we may observe that the dramatist decided to enrich the dramatic topos by using the oneiric experience as a communicative space to summarise for the audience the state of affairs in the country and pass judgement upon the play's key characters. The first ghost mentions his heroic deeds on the battlefield against the French, only to call King Richard, in contrast, his "wanton son" (5. 1. 60). The other ghost addresses Woodstock as his "princely son" and desires to guard his "innocent life" (l. 81). Then, reminiscing about the grand past, the ghost of Edward III harshly condemns his successor:

> [*2 Ghost.*] Richard of Bordeaux, my accursèd grandchild,
> Cut off your titles to the kingly state
> And now your lives and all would ruinate,
> Murders his grandsire's son, his father's brothers,
> Becomes a landlord of my kingly titles,
> Rents out my crown's revenues, racks my subjects
> That spent their bloods with me in conquering France,
> Beheld me ride in state through London streets
> And at my stirrup, lowly footing by,
> Four captive kings to grace my victory.
> (ll. 85–94)

In the previous chapter, we discussed the political implications of the ghostly narrator in the literature of the period (see Chapter 2. 7). In this context, as well as the context of the play itself, it almost looks as if the ghosts' intervention in *Thomas of Woodstock* prepared the ground for the restoration of order by a change of monarch. That, however, does not seem to happen in the play and the story ends in a reconciliatory tone.[133] Corbin and Sedge,

[133] For an attempt at the reconstruction of the ending of the play, which is missing from the only surviving manuscript, see Corbin and Sedge 37–38.

nevertheless, stress that "[a]udiences would be aware that Richard was eventually deposed because of his failure to reform",[134] so it is possible that the anonymous playwright put the derogatory words in the ghosts' mouths either assuming that the theatregoers would finish the story for themselves or with a plan for a second part in mind. Although, in the light of Shakespeare's subsequent play dealing with the later part of Richard II's reign, the existence of a direct continuation of *Thomas of Woodstock* is unlikely, it cannot be dismissed with absolute certainty. Considering the play's treatment of oneiric material, however, we can safely state that *Woodstock* belongs to the wave of "Elizabethan dream plays" which appeared in the early 1590s to revive the ancient literary topos and turn it into a modern and effective dramatic device, which took root in the English dramatic language of the early modern era.

If we remain in the period between 1590 and 1595, we may find another example of a historical play drawing upon the popularity of mantic dreams: the famous *Sir Thomas More*, written perhaps by Anthony Munday and later revised by several other dramatists, including William Shakespeare.[135] Shakespeare's possible contribution has attracted considerable critical attention to the play, raising the question whether the dramatist's share in the piece is indeed limited to the well-known 147 manuscript lines designated as "hand D", or whether he had some hand in other portions of the play as well, perhaps even in its overall design.[136] Recently, Petr Osolsobě has suggested that "Shakespeare wrote at least the whole of the second half of the play, hastily rewritten by Munday or somebody else".[137] Among the verbal, thematic and image parallels with Shakespeare's works, Osolsobě stresses that "the dramatic usage of divinatory dreams and portents in *Sir Thomas More* bears some similarity to Shakespeare's".[138]

The lengthy account of several ominous dreams takes place in 4. 2, in the conversation between the worried Lady More, her daughters and her son-in-law Roper:

[134] See Corbin and Sedge 38.

[135] The date of the text has not been agreed upon unanimously. Although Bartieli and Melchiori, in their influential Revels edition of the play, accept the orthodox view that the original was written no later than 1593, with the question of the revisions remaining open (see Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori, Introduction, in *Sir Thomas More*, by Anthony Munday et al. [Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990] 1–53 at 12), Jowett, in his most recent Arden Shakespeare edition, places its origin around the year 1600 and the revisions after 1603 (see John Jowett, Introduction, in *Sir Thomas More*, by Anthony Munday et al. [London: Arden Shakespeare, 2011] 1–129 at 5–7).

[136] See Gabrieli and Melchiori 23.

[137] Petr Osolsobě, "*Sir Thomas More*: Less Collaborative, More Shakespearean", in *Shakespeare and His Collaborators over the Centuries*, 67–75 at 68–69.

[138] Osolsobě 73.

> [*Lady.*] […] You are a scholar:
> I pray ye tell me, may one credit dreams?
> *Roper.* Why ask you that, dear madam?
> *Lady.* Because tonight I had the strangest dream
> That e'er my sleep was troubled with.
> Methought 'twas night,
> And that the King and Queen went on the Thames
> In Barges to hear music. My Lord and I
> Were in a little boat, methought […]
> and being near,
> We grappled to the barge that bare the king.
> But after many pleasing voices spent
> In that still moving music-house, methought
> The violence of the stream did sever us
> Quite from the golden fleet, and hurried us,
> Unto the bridge, […]
> our boat stood still
> Just opposite the Tower, and there it turned,
> And turned about, as when a whirlpool sucks
> The circled waters. Methought that we both cried,
> Till that we sunk, where arm in arm we died.
> *Roper.* Give no respect, dear Madame to fond dreams:
> They are but slight illusions of the blood.
> *Lady.* Tell me not all are so, for often dreams,
> Are true diviners, either of good or ill.
> I cannot be in quiet till I hear
> How my Lord fares.
> (4. 2. 5–13, 14–20, 22–32)

Although Roper offers his mother-in-law a purely naturalistic explanation of her vision, attributing the dream to the work of humours, he secretly shares with his wife his misgivings about Sir Thomas's fate:

> [*Roper (aside).*] I will not fright thy mother, to interpret
> The nature of a dream; but trust me, sweet,
> This night I have been troubled with thy father
> Beyond all thought.
> *Roper's Wife.* Truly and so have I.
> Methought I saw him here in Chelsea Church,
> Standing upon the Rood loft, now defac'd.
> And whilst he kneeled and prayed before the image,
> It fell with him into the upper choir,
> Where my poor father lay all stained in blood.
> *Roper.* Our dreams all meet in one conclusion,
> Fatal, I fear.
> (ll. 33–43)

Not much later, all the dreams prove to be true, since More is indeed arrested and ultimately executed for treason.

There are several notable differences in the employment of the prophetic dream in *Sir Thomas More* compared with *2 Henry VI* and *Thomas of Woodstock*. Perhaps the strongest factor affecting the dreams' effect is the episodic character of the plot of the play, following more or less disconnected incidents from Thomas More's life. Although three main movements of the story – More's rise, achievement, and fall – are discernible within

the play's structure, the plot works very little with dramatic anticipation or exposition of ensuing events. Whereas, in the "well-constructed" history plays of the period, the audience are usually informed soon enough about the aspirations of the play's key characters and form some expectations as to their fortunes and the future development of the plot, the crucial points in *Thomas More*'s story take place with little or no dramatic preparation having been established. The King, who is indirectly presented in Lady More's dream as the cause of her and her husband's death and who indeed lies behind Sir Thomas's fall, never appears in the play in person and rather than as More's open enemy, he is presented as an invisible and somewhat unpredictable hand of destiny, being far from a vicious, damnable danger such as the Cardinal and the group of conspirators in *2 Henry VI* or the malicious Richard II and his flatterers in *Thomas of Woodstock*. Moreover, Thomas More is never informed about the contents of the mantic dreams and is not, therefore, given an opportunity to take any action in order to alter his destiny. Stewart asserts that one of the basic rôles of a prophetic dream and its misunderstanding is the emphasis on "the dramatic, and tragic, irony of man's inability to recognize his fate even when it is, symbolically, revealed to him".[139] Since no such revelation takes place in *Sir Thomas More*, the dream motif does not and cannot fulfil this dramatic function.

Yet the dreams do contain a powerful foreboding of Thomas More's destiny. If we look more closely at his character, we observe that, from the beginning of the play, More maintains a markedly passive attitude to life and fate. John Jowett writes about him that "[i]f anything, he acts against action".[140] Using water-journey imagery, not dissimilar to that of his wife's dream, More asserts that "new days begets new tides, / Life whirls 'bout fate, then to a grave it slides" (2. 3. 247f). When, later on, he is deprived of his post of royal Councillor, instead of trying to restore himself to the King's favour he believes that "The king seems to be a physician to [his] fate, / His princely mind would train [him] back to state" (4. 3. 79f). Finally, when faced with the possibility of death, More limits his actions to the proclamation that "*Pro eris generosis servis gloriosum mori* [Dying for generous masters is the servants' glory]" (4. 4. 88; original italics). More's stoicism to a large extend reflects the tone of Lady More's dream: the journey on the river, on which her husband and she are left at mercy of the violent stream, without even attempting to take any actions to change the course of their boat, can be read as a metaphor of the mode of

[139] Stewart, "Misunderstood Dreams", 206.
[140] Jowett 1.

Thomas More's journey through life, which indeed ends in the Tower and, in his own words, ultimately slides him into a grave.

Sir Thomas's daughter's dream also seems to contribute to her father's character and destiny. Roper's wife has a vision of the man "kneel[ing] and pray[ing] before the image", which is "now defac'd". At the time when *Sir Thomas More* takes place, Catholic images had not yet been removed from English churches, so the dream is more prophetic in terms of actual history than the events of the play. It is, however, important to note that, in the dream, the fall of the image (the symbol of the old religion) takes with it the devout More as well, just as it, metaphorically, did the historical Thomas More. The play touches upon religious controversies during Henry VIII's reign extremely subtly and carefully (for obvious reasons), but it is clear that the cause of the disagreement between More and the King, which ends in More's execution, is a matter of faith: at the beginning of Act 4 (Scene 10 according to the Arden Shakespeare edition), the Chancellor refuses to sign unspecified articles sent by the King,[141] remaining faithful to his conviction, even if it means both his political and physical end.

A slightly different kind of mantic dream can be found in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, a play which we may still consider as part of the group of early Elizabethan dream plays. The night after Lord Stanley and Lord Hastings are invited to two "divided councils" in the Tower – one about the coronation of King Edward V and a private one about Richard's scheme to obtain the throne – Lord Stanley has a terrible dream, which urges him to send a messenger to Lord Hastings at four o'clock in the morning in order to warn him (see also Chapter 1. 10):

> [*Messenger.*] He dreamt the boar had razèd off his helm.
> Besides, he says there are two councils kept,
> And that may be determined at the one
> Which may make you and him to rue at th'other.
> Therefore he sends to know your lordship's pleasure –
> If you will presently take horse with him
> And with all speed post with him toward the north
> To shun the danger that his soul divines.
> (3. 2. 8–15)

Hastings rejects Stanley's fears, calling them "shallow, without instance" (l. 22), and wonders whether Lord Stanley is "so simple / To trust the mock'ry of dreams" (ll. 23f).

[141] They are the 1533 *Articles Devised by the Whole Consent of the King's Most Honourable Council*, accusing the Pope of heresy and undermining his authority, and, by extension, the Oath of Supremacy of 1534, establishing the – according to the Catholic view – illegitimate Princess Elizabeth as the heir to the English throne.

The audience, however, know that Richard – whose designation is a boar – has decided to test Hastings and Stanley's fidelity to him and if Hastings, the more dominant of the two lords, does not support the Duke's plans to get the crown for himself, Richard will order his execution. Indeed, when Richard on the following morning learns that Hastings will stay loyal to the rightful heir to the realm and will never support Gloucester's claim to the throne, he has him executed immediately. Had Lord Hastings seriously considered Stanley's dream, he would, in all probability, have lived. Stanley himself narrowly saves his own life by pretending loyalty to Richard, only to fulfil his original plan later on and defect from Richard to Richmond's side.

Unlike in the cases of the previous three histories, Stanley's dream in *Richard III* refers to a relatively minor character in the play, its structural rôle not surpassing the short episode ending with Lord Hastings's execution two scenes later. At the same time, it is also the first Shakespearian dream which has a clear historical model. Thomas More gives an historical account of the incident:

> For the self night next before his [*i.e.*, Lord Hastings's] death, the lord Standley sent a trustie secret messenger vnto him at midnight in al the hast, requiring hym to rise and ryde away with hym, for he was disposed vtterly no lenger to bide; he had so fereful a dreme, in which him thoughte that a bore with his tuskes so raced them both bi the heddes, that the blood ranne aboute both their shoulders. And forasmuch as the protector gaue the bore for his cognisaunce, this dreme made so fereful an impression in his hart, that he was throughly determined no lenger to tary, but had his horse redy, if the lord Hastinges wold go with him to ride so far yet the same night, that thei shold be out of danger ere dai. Ey, good lord, quod the lord Hastinges to this messenger, leneth mi lord thi master so much to such trifles, and hath such faith in dremes, which either his own fere fantasieth or do rise in the nightes rest by reson of his daye thoughtes? Tel him it is plaine witchraft to beleue in suche dremes[.][142]

Although More's report is almost identical to Shakespeare's, one detail missing from the dramatic version of the episode suggests that Shakespeare adapted his source in order to raise suspense and make the dream more ambiguous to the characters of the play.

Whereas More's Stanley knows from the beginning that the boar from his dream refers to the Protector and provides Hastings with his interpretation to warn him, Shakespeare decided not to mention the (to the audience) obvious connection between the oneiric image and Richard and leaves Hastings oblivious of its true meaning. The audience are thus left to watch whether the Earl will be able to decipher the warning before it is too late.[143] On the following morning, however, Hastings again mocks Stanley's dream (3. 2.

[142] More 48–49.

[143] Apart from the historical connection between the boar and Richard of Gloucester, Stanley's dream might have had a more universal nature for Elizabethan audiences. See Thomas Hill, *A Most Briefe and Pleasant Treatise of the Interpretation of Sundrie Dreames* (London: Simon Stafford, 1601) sig. B5$^{r}$: "And hee that thinketh to fight with an Hogge, signifieth the danger of an enemie. And to see Porcklings enter into

69f), obviously missing the gravity of its message. Richard's order for his execution takes him completely by surprise. In the last moments of his life, Lord Hastings, ironically (and quite unhistorically), regrets his scorning of the dream on the previous night, admitting that he, "too fond, might have prevented this" (3. 4. 81).

Shakespearian dream prophecies, however, are in certain cases able to fulfil their main structural and dramatic functions even without having a specific content. At the beginning of the previous chapter, we discussed Romeo's ominous vision mentioned before he enters the Capulets' house with his companions. Having previously referred to an ominous dream, Romeo expresses his fear that

> [*Romeo.*] Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels, and expire the term
> Of a despisèd life, closed in my breast[.]
> (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.4.107–10)

However, he lets Mercutio easily persuade him that dreams are a mere "nothing" in a similar manner as dreams of the already discussed dreamers were explained away. When the unspecified nocturnal warning is later on further substantiated by Juliet's vague daydream and by Romeo's fully developed vision, in which "[his] lady came and found [him] dead" (5. 1. 6), the dreamer's and the audience's reactions remain unchanged: neither Romeo nor Juliet pays any particular attention to the warnings and they both fail to take actions to prevent their doom, whereas the theatregoers, being familiar with the dramatic connotations of prophetic dreams and, moreover, already knowing from the prologue that "A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life" (Prologue 6), realise that all the three dreams lay the grounds for a catastrophic outcome.

Another example of an undisclosed dream prophecy which enters a dramatic plot as a technical device is a rather inconspicuous, and often neglected, episode in Shakespeare's early tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. In scene 2. 2, Titus and his sons are on a hunt held to celebrate Emperor Saturninus's and his brother Bassanius's weddings and Titus's victorious return to Rome from the war with the Goths. Unbeknownst to Titus, Tamora, the new Empress and Titus's former enemy, is hatching a plot against him in order to avenge the sacrifice of one of her sons. Despite his objective ignorance of the approaching danger, Titus is anxious about the future and expresses his worries to his sons:

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thy house, doth after declare messengers of the King to come unto thee unlooked for, but beware of the King."

> [*Titus.*] Sons, let it be your charge, as it is ours,
> To attend the Emperor's person carefully.
> I have been troubled in my sleep this night,
> But dawning day new comfort hath inspired.
> (2. 2. 7–10)

Although the audience never learn the actual contents of Titus's nightmares, the simple mention of them significantly heightens dramatic suspense and contributes to the brooding atmosphere of what was originally a cheerful event, since Tamora's plans have already been revealed and it is obvious that Titus's troubled sleep foreshadows a tragedy to come. The dreamer himself, however, conventionally underestimates the gravity of ensuing events, which soon proves to have been a fatal mistake. Indeed, as early as the following scene, the spiral of violence starts, beginning with Bassanius's murder and ending in the multiple deaths of Saturninus, Titus, and most of their families.

The dream motif returns later on in the play. When the level of inhumanity reaches its apex and Titus is tricked into cutting off his hand, only to be presented with the severed heads of his sons, the overwhelmed old man exclaims, "When will this fearful slumber have an end?" (3. 1. 251) He has realised that his daytime reality has turned into the nightmares whose validity he initially rejected. The theme of Titus's dreaming and its metamorphoses, pervading the entire plot of the play, contribute to the character's focal position in the story, and thus present the slaughter on the stage as a fundamentally human rather than political tragedy.

From the examples discussed, we might draw several conclusions as to the nature of dream prophecies in Elizabethan drama. First of all, mantic dreams are presented as a fairly natural phenomenon in the plays. Although their origin is never fully clarified, their existence does not seem to be surprising or in any way extraordinary. In accordance with early modern tenets, the problematic question surrounding dreams is their interpretation, which is also the source of their dramatic effect. On the one hand, Elizabethan nocturnal warnings are always true (with the exception of obviously fabricated prophecies, mentioned, for instance, by Richard of Gloucester [*Richard III* 1. 1. 32–35]) and can be readily interpreted. The characters in crucial situations, however, seem to lack the "sure and perfite Arte" to do so. The audience, for whom the dreams are, from the beginning, reasonably clear, are therefore left to observe the ignorant cast of dramatic protagonists meeting their destiny, which they cannot prevent even if it is foreshadowed to them.

Most typical dreamers in the dramatic works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are aristocrats or men of a high rank. This can be partly due to the

persisting belief in a class of privileged dreamers, but also to the fact that early Elizabethan dream plays were usually histories or tragedies, which normally deal with the fortunes of noble characters. An exception might be the dream of Arden of Faversham in the play of the same title (early 1590s), warning him against his assassination (sc. 6, ll. 6–31), upon which master Franklin persuades his friend that dreams are "but a mockery" (l. 40). *Arden of Faversham*, however, is a rare example of Elizabethan domestic tragedy, with no parallel in the examined period. Interestingly enough, dream omens do not seem to have ruling monarchs as recipients, although they often relate to the magistrate in some respect. Perhaps due to the historical significance of royal visions, discussed in the introduction to the present chapter, the concept of the King having a prophetic dream was too theologically sensitive and its presence on an early modern Christian (and especially Protestant) stage was undesirable.

As we can see especially in the example of Duke Humphrey's uncanny vision, prophetic dreams could be used as an effective dramatic device not only to create short suspense, but also to foreshadow the general development of the plot and tendencies of its characters. At the same time, dreams subtly stressed the idea of fatality and inevitability: with a great dramatic irony, mentioned by Stewart, they showed Man that his destiny was to a high extent in the hands of forces beyond his comprehension and authority.

### 3. 3 Dream Prophecies of Shakespeare's Middle Period

Although by 1595, the fashion for the use of the prophetic dream as a technical device in Elizabethan drama seems to have had passed its height, the topos never disappeared from early modern English plays and Shakespeare, like some of his contemporaries and successors, returned to it sporadically throughout his dramatic career. Around the year 1600, we can identify three plays in Shakespeare's dramatic canon which employ the conventional motif in a way similar to the use of dreams in his earlier histories.

Perhaps the best known of the oneiric episodes takes place in Act 2, Scene 2 of *Julius Caesar*. On the night before Caesar's assassination, his wife Calpurnia has a horrid vision, in which

> [*Caesar.*] […] she saw my [*i.e.*, Caesar's] statue,
> Which like a fountain with an hundred spouts
> Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
> Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.
> (ll. 76–79)

The dream is followed by the standard pattern: Calpurnia begs Caesar not to go to the Capitol and adjourn the session of the senate. Her husband hesitantly agrees, but then Decius Brutus, one of the conspirators, enters the stage to give Caesar a whole new interpretation of his wife's nightmare:

> *Decius.* This dream is all amiss interpreted.
> It was a vision fair and fortunate.
> Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,
> In which so many smiling Romans bathed,
> Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck
> Reviving blood, and that great men shall press
> For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.
> This by Calpurnia's dream is signified.
> (ll. 83–90)

Just as in the case of Lord Stanley's uncanny dream of *Richard III*, Calpurnia's nightmare has a historical model, written down by Plutarch.[144] Although Shakespeare's version of the incident follows the Roman source quite faithfully, the dramatist obviously adapted the original material to fit his artistic purpose better. First of all, the impressive content of the dream is Shakespeare's own invention – according to Plutarch's version, Calpurnia just dreamed "that Caesar was slain, and that she had him in her arms".[145] The fictitious imagery of the vision is directly linked with the macabre spectacle after the murder, during which the senators bathe their hands in Caesar's blood up to their elbows and carry his corpse to the marketplace for public display (3. 1. 106–9). The dream, presaging that "many lusty Romans came smiling and did bathe their hands in it [*i.e.*, the statue of Caesar]" thus proves to be accurate to the last dreadful detail, producing an even greater dramatic irony than its mere general fulfilment would have.

An important element in his decision to disregard Calpurnia's ominous dream is, as L. W. Rogers observed,[146] Caesar's vanity. The fear of being mocked by people, who would, according to Decius, say "'Lo, Caesar is afraid'" (l. 101), surely plays a significant rôle in his decision to go to the Capitol. Shakespeare, however, elaborated upon his source, according to which the conspirators promised Caesar to "grant him all things, and to proclaim him king of all the provinces of the Empire of Rome out of Italy", adding that "he should wear his Diadem in all other places both by sea and land".[147] In Shakespeare's version, Caesar becomes almost a saintly relic, standing above earthly rulers, from which

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[144] See Plutarch, *Shakespeare's Plutarch*, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke, Vol. 1 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1909) 97–98.
[145] Plutarch, *Shakespeare's Plutarch* I, 97.
[146] See L. W. Rogers, "Symbolical Dreams in Shakespeare", *The Theosophist* 58 (1937): 21–25 at 22.
[147] Plutarch, *Shakespeare's Plutarch* I, 98.

"great Rome shall suck reviving blood". This concept is very Christian in essence and resonated with early modern English audiences. When, half a century after the play, the English king Charles I (1625–1649) was executed, witnesses of the time inform us that

> [h]is blood was taken up by divers persons for different ends: by some as trophies of villainy; by others as relics of martyr; and in some hath had the same effect, by the blessing of God, which was often found in his sacred touch when living.[148]

Ironically, although Caesar was compelled to belief in the sanctity of his blood, it finally turned into a trophy of villainy on the Romans' arms and swords.

Another fine detail added by Shakespeare is Caesar's encounter with a soothsayer at the beginning of the play, who warns him twice to "Beware the ides of March" (1. 2. 19, 25). According to Shakespeare's account of the incident (which is again mentioned by Plutarch),[149] Caesar spurns the man, saying that he is "a dreamer" (l. 26). This brief episode, showing Caesar's disbelief in dream omens, foreshadows, as it were, Calpurnia's warning and prepares for her husband's foolish reaction. In the light of the validity of both the soothsayer's prophecy and Calpurnia's dream, however, the episode also establishes the truthfulness of all subsequent dream predictions of the play, be it Cinna's dream that he did feast with the dead Caesar, immediately followed by the poet's death (3. 3), or the appearance of Caesar's ghost to the slumbering Brutus, informing him that the two of them will meet at Philippi, the place of Brutus's subsequent doom (4. 2. 333–37).

Another Shakespearian play dealing with classical material and containing a dream prophecy is *Troilus and Cressida*. The dream episode takes place towards the end of the play, in Act 5, Scene 3, when Andromache begs her husband, Hector, not to go to battle with the Achaeans:

> *Andromache.* When was my lord so much ungently tempered
> To stop his ears against admonishment?
> Unarm, unarm, and do not fight today.
> *Hector.* You train me to offend you. Get you in.
> By all the everlasting gods, I'll go.
> *Andromache.* My dreams will sure prove ominous to the day.
> *Hector.* No more, I say.
> […]
> *Andromache.* […] I have dreamed
> Of bloody turbulence, and this whole night
> Hath nothing been but shapes and forms of slaughter.
> (5. 3. 1–7, 10–12)

[148] "The Execution of Charles I", in *Readings in European History*, Vol. 2, ed. James Harvey Robinson (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1906) 241–45 at 245.
[149] See Plutarch, *Shakespeare's Plutarch* I, 96.

In spite of Andromache's and his sister Cassandra's pleas, Hector goes to battle, only to be slain in an unfair fight with the Myrmidons in 5. 9. The Trojan army is left in shock and, in the epilogue (5. 11), the title character Troilus promises the Greeks revenge.

Despite the surface similarities with *Julius Caesar* and other already discussed dreams, we may discern several differences in the dramaturgical presentation of Andromache's nocturnal warning. First of all, although Hector is several times praised as the noblest and bravest of Trojan warriors, the military campaign as such plays only a secondary part in the plot and Hector himself is not one of the main characters of the play: he is given fewer lines (213) than both title characters (537 and 295 respectively), and even the clownish characters Pandarus (394) and Thersites (284).[150] Consequently, the dream warning addressed to Hector has a less central rôle in the story than, for instance, the dream of Duke Humphrey, who is a key character of *2 Henry VI*.

Hector's wife's rôle in *Troilus and Cressida* is similar to Portia's in *Julius Caesar*: she appears in just one scene to give an account of her nightmare. Unlike in *Julius Caesar*, however, there is no dramatic preparation for the dream's fulfilment. Although an encounter between Achilles and Hector is originally expected, Achilles, still before the dream episode, decides not to join the battle because of the oath he gave to his beloved, Queen Hecuba's daughter (5. 1. 32–42). His last-minute decision to fight is provoked much later by the death of his friend Patroclus (5. 5. 46–49). As Drábek observes, the play does not present the killing of Hector as a stroke of destiny, but rather as a question of a "brief affection, egoistic outburst or simple fortuity" on Achilles' part.[151] Andromache's ominous dream thus loses much of the dramatic effect of the previous examples, which expected the audience's foreknowledge of the ensuing danger, in light of which the rejection of the dream was immediately presented as foolish.

This non-pertinent use of the dream motif in *Troilus and Cressida* seems to be symptomatic for the entire play. Although the popular topos is formally present in the story, it is not given the dramatic functions which similar episodes usually have in Shakespearian plays and deceives the audience rather than actively contributing to the development of the plot. In terms of its actual rôle in the design of the play, the dream is little more than an ornament, devoid of its basic dramaturgical potential. This, however, does not mean that the presence of the episode is entire without a dramatic purpose: as

[150] The statistics derive from Dunton-Downer and Riding.

[151] Pavel Drábek, "Válka a smilstvo: bezútěšné světy *Troila a Kressidy*", in *Troilus a Kressida*, by William Shakespeare (Prague: Národní divadlo, 2012) 14–33 at 16: "Jestli Achilles Hektora zabije, nebo nezabije, bylo v tu chvíli otázkou letmého afektu, samolibého vzplanutí nebo prostě nahodilosti."

Frederick S. Boas – who coined the term "problem plays" in the context of Shakespearian drama, among which he included *Troilus and Cressida* – argues, subversion is the key technique employed in the play. Despite its nominal affiliation with Chaucer's poem, *Troilus and Cressida* turns, in Boas's words, the mediaeval romance into "the delirious passion of a youth for a mere wanton", presenting courtly love as "an intoxication of the senses, paralyzing the will, blinding the gaze, and sapping manhood at its source".[152] The secondary plot of the play (which is, despite the play's title, given more space than the romance) then, to Boas's mind, cynically presents the classical heroes of the Trojan war "in travestied form", almost as if Shakespeare were "heaping ridicule upon his rival [*i.e.*, Homer]".[153] In a similar manner, Marjorie Garber talks about the play's "puzzling, irresolute quality",[154] asserting that the story's oscillation between radically different themes and moods prevents any generic labelling and poses an issue for its overall interpretation.[155] The dramatic dream, which (as we stated in the previous chapter) is predominantly a device of tragic genres, but, in this specific case, lacks much of its tragic potential from the very beginning, is then, as it were, one of many red-herrings and sources of dramatic frustration which Shakespeare deploys in creating the peculiarly uneasy and ungraspable atmosphere of the work.

Another possible explanation for the surprisingly passive rôle of the episode – which does not necessarily exclude the observation which we have just made – is the possible connection between a different nature of the dream and the play's different audiences. Whereas the previously discussed plays by Shakespeare were all staged in public theatres, there is no securely recorded performance of *Troilus and Cressida* before 1898. The text was first published in 1609 and, as Lukeš notes, set most probably from a private copy intended for reading, not staging.[156] The foreword to the Quarto presents the text as "a new play, neuer stal'd with the Stage, neuer clapper-clawd with the palmes of the of the vulger",[157] appealing to the sophisticated literary taste of a reader.

Although the Quarto edition, including the foreword, was almost certainly unauthorised and there are reasons to believe that the play was indeed staged prior to its

[152] Frederick S. Boas, *Shakespeare and His Predecessors*, 1904 (London: John Murray, 1910) 373.
[153] Boas 377.
[154] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004) 538.
[155] Cf. Drábek, "Válka a smilstvo", 20–23.
[156] See Lukeš 34.
[157] William Shakespeare, *The Famous Historie of Troylus and Cresseid* (London: G. Eld for R. Bonian and H. Walley, 1609) sig. ¶2[r].

first publication,[158] the fact that it circulated in private copies and its first publisher wanted to attract the attention of elite readers testifies to the play's popularity among more educated audiences, for whom it might have been originally written. Such audiences were probably well acquainted with the story of Hector either from the original version by Homer (which does not mention Andromache having a dream) or from Lydgate's or Lefèvre's accounts (which do include the dream episode).[159] As such, the dramatisation of the well-known incident did not have to be as generous and Shakespeare might have counted on the spectators' ability to supply the dramaturgical ellipses with their own knowledge of the material.

About a decade after Shakespeare, however, the episode was somewhat more effectively included in the first part of the classical two-part play *The Iron Age* (1632) by Thomas Heywood (early 1570s–1641). Similarly to Shakespeare's version, Heywood's Hector is about to go to battle, when Andromache enters the stage, urging him to stay. When asked for the reason, Hector's wife replies:

> *Andromache.* A ferafull dreame,
> This night me thought I saw thee 'mongst the *Greekes*
> Round girt with squadrons of thine enemies,
> All which their Iavelins thrild against thy brest,
> And stucke them in thy bosome.
> […]
> I wak't and slept, and slept and wak't againe:
> But both my slumbers and my sound sleepes
> Met in this one maine truth, if thou this day
> Affront their Army or oppose their fleete,
> After this day we ne'er more shall meete.[160]

Hector, however, has little understanding for Andromache's fears and reproaches her for believing in such superstitions:

> *Hector.* Trust not deceptious visions, dreames are fables,
> Adulterate Sceanes of Anticke forgeries
> Playd vpon idle braines, come Lords to horse
> To keepe me from the field, dreames haue no force.[161]

[158] Robert Kimbrough maintains that *Troilus and Cressida* was in the repertory of the Chamberlain's Men since about 1601 (see Robert Kimbrough, "The Origins of *Troilus and Cressida*: Stage, Quarto, and Folio", *PMLA* 77 [1962]: 194–99). John Jones suggests that he play was staged in private, having possibly been written "for clever young lawyers at one of the Inns of Court, possibly for a university audience" (John Jones, *Shakespeare at Work* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995] 53).

[159] See John Lydgate, *The Auncient Historie and Onely Trewe and Syncere Cronicle of the Warres betwixte the Grecians and the Troyans* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1555) sigs. R6$^{r}$–S2$^{v}$; and Raoul Lefèvre, *The Auncient Historie, of the Destruction of Troy* (London: Thomas Creede and Valentine Simmes, 1596) 526–29.

[160] Thomas Heywood, *The Iron Age*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*, Vol. 3 (London: John Pearson, 1874) 257–345 at 316–17. (Original italics.)

[161] Heywood 317.

With the help of King Priam, Queen Hecuba, Paris and Helen, Andromache finally manages to persuade her husband not to go to the field and only watch the battle from the city walls. When, however, Achilles kills Hector's brother Margareton, Hector joins the battle and is ultimately slain by Achilles's Myrmidons.

Unlike Shakespeare's play, the main focus of Heywood's drama is the Trojan War itself and the romance between Troilus and Cressida and Paris and Helena is kept to a minimum. Although the genre of the play is still debatable, it surely has markedly fewer elements of comedy than Shakespeare's piece, and rather points towards a tragedy or classical history, which seem to be more suitable for dream omens presaging catastrophic ends. Hector of *The Iron Age* appears at the very beginning of the play and immediately attracts the audience's attention by being the only Trojan to express his misgivings about the plan to avenge the abduction of the King's sister Hesione by the Greeks. The uneasy atmosphere of the play is thus established, soon corroborated by Cassandra's warning addressed to Andromache that the result of any campaign against the Greeks will be that she "[shall] loose a *Hector*, who's yet [hers]".[162] Hector is depicted as the central character of the play, a crucial warrior for Troy, "on whose valour / They [*i.e.*, the Trojans] build their proud defiance",[163] and, as such, he is the main target of the Achaeans. The final encounter between Hector and Achilles is dramatically anticipated from the very beginning of the story, with no particular knowledge of Greek mythology necessary, and Andromache's dream is the definite affirmation of its impending outcome. Moreover, the fact that Hector first obeys his wife and only later loses his temper and joins the battle creates suspense: he may or may not save his life. From the dramatic point of view, Heywood's account of the story seems to be more versatile and faithful to the Elizabethan tradition of dream prophecies than Shakespeare's.

The last play of the middle period of Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre containing what appears to be a significant dream prophecy is the – in this respect – usually neglected comedy *The Merchant of Venice*. The single, inconspicuous mention of a dream appears in Act 2, Scene 5 of the play, in which Shylock the Jew is about to leave his house for a dinner party organized by Bassanio and expresses his misgivings to his daughter, saying:

> [*Shylock.*] […] Jessica, my girl,
> Look to my house. I am right loath to go,
> There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,

[162] Heywood 271. (Original italics.)
[163] Heywood 293.

For I did dream of money-bags tonight.
(2. 5. 15–18)

Most commentators associated the dream of money-bags with the stereotypical image of a Jew, whose main function is to contribute to Shylock's avaricious character. Manfred Weidhorn, for instance, in the entry "Dream" in *The Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs*, mentions Shylock's dream in the group of "wish fulfilment or 'vocational' anxiety dreams",[164] known, for example, from the catalogues of dreamers and their dreams similar to Mercutio's (see Chapter 2. 1 of the present study). The director Jonathan Miller, in his 1970 production of *The Merchant of Venice* for the National Theatre in London, went so far as cutting the – in his words – "obviously prejudicial" dream episode altogether in order to show Shylock (played by Laurence Olivier) in a better light.[165]

A restless sleep was indeed commonly associated with Jews, usurers, or the rich in general. In his 1608 treatise *Characters of Vertues and Vices*, the then Bishop of Exeter Joseph Hall (1574–1656) characterized a covetous man as one who "In his short and unquiet sleepes […] dreemes of theeves, & runnes to the doore, and names more men than he hath".[166] The same motif appears in the mediaeval or early modern ballad of *Gernutus, the Jew of Venice*,[167] a possible source for Shakespeare's play, whose fifth stanza describes Gernutus as a usurer, who "cannot sleep in rest, / For fear the thief will him pursue, / To pluck him from his nest".[168] If we go somewhat deeper into the past, we may find a mention of the rich dreaming of gold in the passage of Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls*, commented upon in the introductory chapter of the present study (l. 103); similarly, the already mentioned fifth-century Roman poet Claudian (c. 370–404), in his catalogue of dreamers and their dreams, writes about the miser who still watchfully grasps at elusive riches (*vigil elapsas quaerit avarus opes*).[169]

When passing a definitive judgement upon Shylock's dream, it is, however, first necessary to consider the overall image of the Jew's character in the play and examine whether a stereotypical wish-fulfilment dream would be consistent with his personality. When *The Merchant of Venice* was first staged, England was officially free of Jews, who

[164] Weidhorn, "Dream", 410.

[165] James C. Bulman, *Shakespeare in Performance: The Merchant of Venice* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991) 88.

[166] Joseph Hall, *Characters of Vertues and Vices in Two Bookes* (London: Melch. Bradwood for Eleazar Edgar and Samuel Macham, 1608) 128–29.

[167] The oldest surviving printed edition dates back to 1640 (STC [2nd ed.] 11796.7).

[168] *Gernutus, the Jew of Venice*, in *The Book of Ballads*, ed. John R. Crossland (Glasgow: Collins Clear-Type P, 1940) 38–43 at 38.

[169] See Claudian 70.

were expelled from the country by King Edward I's edict in 1280 and only invited back as late as 1655, during the later years of Oliver Cromwell's reign. The estimated Jewish population in England in Shakespeare's lifetime was no more than two hundred,[170] and it is not very probable that Shakespeare, or the vast majority of his audiences, met any of them in the flesh. The Elizabethan concept of Jewishness was therefore, as Hilský words it, a result of shared, and (to a high degree) ritual or ritualized experience, based on a set of cultural and literary stereotypes rather than any actual observation.[171]

One such stereotype is the story of an unscrupulous Jewish usurer, who lends an impoverished knight or a merchant a sum of money against a pound of the borrower's own flesh, and when the bond is forfeited, insists on its fulfilment. This tale had been very popular both in English and continental literatures since the thirteenth century[172] and Elizabethan theatregoers were familiar with it, for instance, through the lost satirical comedy *The Jew* (1576–1579) or the already mentioned *Gernutus, the Jew of Venice*; those able to read Italian might have known it from a fourteenth-century novella by Giovani Fiorentino (p. 1558), which Shakespeare's play closely follows. However, as Hilský observes, whereas the Jew of Shakespeare's predecessors was a two-dimensional, straightforwardly cruel figure with no real motivation for his actions apart from his vicious character,[173] Shakespeare subverts this stereotype by giving Shylock an understandable reason for his behaviour. The spectator is, in detail, informed of numerous abuses from the side of Antonio and his friends which Shylock has had to suffer; on the other hand, none of Shylock's expected misdeeds is actually specified or even shown on stage. The elopement of his daughter Jessica with one of Antonio's companions, and her theft of her father's money and jewellery, is presented as the proverbial last straw leading to Shylock's exasperated exclamation, "The villainy you teach me I will execute" (3. 1. 60f).

Shakespeare's usurer, although a stock character appearing in around seventy early modern English plays, thus significantly diverges from most prototypes, and his resemblance to them is predominantly superficial. Bernard Grebanier stresses that Shakespeare's intention was not to depict Shylock as "yet another caricature […] to laugh at", but as "a villain entitled to respect to a degree, a man with his own dignity and perspective".[174] Kenneth McLeish, in a similar fashion, stresses Shylock's human side by

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[170] See James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996) 62–76.

[171] See Hilský 159.

[172] For the genesis of the story of a pound of flesh, see Bernard Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock* (New York: Random House, 1962) 103–18.

[173] See Hilský 165.

[174] Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock*, 93.

defining him as “the only whole person in a sick society”.[175] It is not without interest that of the ten basic characteristics of a stereotypical Elizabethan moneylender which Grebanier lists,[176] Shylock is equipped with only two: 1) he is an old man and 2) he is hard on his servant. Both of these, as Grebanier maintains, are “totally out of the realm of caricature”.[177]

In the light of this relative complexity and, to a large extent, non-stereotypicality of Shylock, which is repeatedly referred to by Shakespeare scholars, it seems somewhat rash to ascribe to him a conventional attribute of a non-complex and stereotypical character. If we return to Thomas Hill’s taxonomy of dreams, introduced in the previous chapter of this thesis, we can see that Elizabethans were familiar with two types of dreams: 1) “vain” ones, reflecting the processes in the dreamer’s body and mind, and 2) “true” ones, presaging things to come. According to the traditional interpretation, Shylock’s dream would be classified as a vain one, since it would reflect his character and waking thoughts. Since we have, however, questioned this reading of the dream episode, the possibility that Shylock’s dream is a prophecy needs to be examined.

The first indication that the dream of money-bags is in fact a foreboding of a certain kind is its position within the *sujet* of the play. Whereas in the ballad of *Gernutus*, the mention of the avaricious Jew’s restless sleep appears at the beginning of the work, which exposes Gernutus’s wicked character (the story proper begins in the seventh stanza), Shylock’s dream is presented as late as Act 2, when all the main characters have been introduced and some of the crucial points of the story have already taken place. By the time Shylock leaves his house, he has lent three thousand ducats to Antonio for the merchant’s friend Bassanio, who needs the funds to woo the rich Portia in Belmont. Lancelot has defected from Shylock to join the service of Bassanio; and Jessica’s plan to elope with Bassanio’s friend Lorenzo has been revealed. Immediately after the dream scene, Jessica makes use of her father’s absence and escapes with her Christian lover, taking with her Shylock’s money and family jewellery. When Shylock discovers this, he is furious and wants revenge. As we have already suggested, the events of the night lay grounds for the further development in both main plots.

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[175] Kenneth McLeish, *Longman Guide to Shakespeare’s Characters* (Harlow: Longman, 1985) 225.

[176] 1) He is an old man; 2) he is a suitor of a young woman; 3) he is hideous, repulsive and often suffers from a bad disease; 4) he has a huge nose; 5) he wears spectacles; 6) at home he starves himself and he is a stingy host; 7) he is very hard on his servants; 8) he dresses miserably, usually wearing clothes acquired from a hangman; 9) he wears a robe rimmed with fur; and 10) his ending is a fearful one, most usually he dies. (See Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock*, 90–91.)

[177] Grebanier, *The Truth About Shylock*, 91.

From a purely structural point of view, Shylock's misgivings are placed just at the right point of the story, when a prophetic dream would be expected. The audience know about the planned action against Shylock and can anticipate a *peripeteia*, in a similar manner as in the already discussed cases of ominous dreams. In order to fulfil the crucial rôles of the dramatic prophecy, however, the meaning of the dream has to be (while neglected by the dreamer) clear to the spectators.

Scrutiny of some of the most popular dream treatises of the period reveals that the dream of money was a frequent and established topos and was universally taken as a bad sign. Artemidorus's *Oneirocriticon* reads that "to dreame of money and all kinde of coyne is ill" and that such a dream signifies "heavinesse and angry wordes", especially when the money is in the form of gold or silver and in large quantities, since "one cannot employ great heapes, without payne and care".[178] *Somniale Danielis*, the most popular mediaeval dreambook, whose contents in the early modern period would still have been common knowledge, connects seeing money in sleep with a lawsuit (*Peccuniam accipere, litem significat*),[179] heaviness, derision or vituperation (*Si uideris plures denarios aut inuenies, parabolas uel irrisiones uel maledictiones significat*),[180] anger (*Denarios tractare significat iracundium*)[181] and, finally, hatred (*Denarios invenire: oidum significat*).[182]

In accordance with the *Somniale*, the chief Mohammedan dream interpreter, Ibn Sirin (eighth century AD), claims that "[i]n all cases, it [i.e. to receive some gold dinars in a dream] is a sign of struggle".[183] The popular tenth-century Byzantine dream interpretation manual known as the *Oneirocriticon Achmetis* argues that the dream of money means quarrels, lawsuits and sorrow (*Si viderit quis se inuenisse minuta aeris, inueniet rixas & lites & aerumnas pro ratione minutorum*),[184] and finally, Cardano's *Somniorum Synesiorum Libri IIII* warns that seeing coins in sleep points at a quarrel or lawsuit (*Nummi aerei rimam aut litem ostendunt*).[185] Surprisingly, all the omens of the dream manuals exactly fit the situations which Shylock will encounter later on in the play, foreboding both the trial scene in Act 4 and Shylock's ultimate fall.

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[178] Artemidorus, *The Judgement, or Exposition of Dreames*, trans. Robert Wood (London: William Jones, 1606) 99–100.
[179] Daniel the Prophet [attributed to], *The Complete Medieval Dreambook*, 102.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Daniel the Prophet [attributed to], *Somniale Danielis*, 87.
[183] Ibn Sirin, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: Dar Al-Taqwa, 2000) 69.
[184] Achmet ibn Sirin [attributed to], *Achmetis Sereimi F. Oneirocritica*, 237.
[185] Cardano II, 154.

Equally striking is the similarity between the plot of the play and certain interpretations of the dream of gold, which was considered so close to the dream of money by the authors of dreambooks that some of them even interpret the two topoi together (after all, a Venetian ducat was of gold, as Shakespeare himself mentions [2. 6. 49f]). Artemidorus, on the one hand, admits that "to dreame to have gold is not bad, because of the matter, as every one wil say, but contrariwise it is good as I have knowne by experience",[186] but at the same time also gives an example when the dream of gold may be dangerous: "Losse of rings to a man, signifies not onely the losse of them that had charge over his goods, as the wife, the tennant &c. but also loss of his goods, landes and possessions".[187] Despite the fact that Shylock dreams of gold in the form of money, not jewellery, the symbol of a lost ring does occur several times in the play: Shylock loses a ring from his late wife when Jessica steals it from him (3. 1) and, later on in the play, Portia and Nerissa use rings to test their husbands' fidelity (4. 2). The dream of gold in Shylock's situation might therefore faithfully tell him about "the losse of them that had charge over his goods", that is, his servant Lancelot, who leaves his household for Bassanio's (2. 2), and his daughter, who elopes with Lorenzo (2. 6). It might also warn him against the "loss of his goods", either presaging Jessica's theft of his money when she escapes or the forfeiture of his property by sentence of the court.

A dream omen which almost copies the trial scene can be found again in Ibn Sirin. According to his dream interpretation manual, "[g]old ingots, as well as those who receive gold, symbolise loss of money or the anger of the prince at meeting the dreamer".[188] Shylock is indeed deprived of money and the angry Duke of Venice calls him "A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch, / Uncapable of pity, void and empty / From any dram of mercy" (4. 1. 3–5).

It would, of course, be somewhat naïve and simplistic to claim that Shakespeare had intimate knowledge of all the aforementioned dreambooks or that he directly used them when writing his play. Considering, however, the popularity of dreams and dream interpretation in the environment in which *The Merchant of Venice* was written, the stability of money as a dream symbol throughout the centuries – even across the cultures – and the context of the play itself, we might reasonably assume that Shakespeare intentionally presented Shylock's dream as a dramatic prophecy, functionally similar to

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[186] Artemidorus, *The Judgement, or Exposition of Dreames*, 61.
[187] Artemidorus, *The Judgement, or Exposition of Dreames*, 62.
[188] Ibn Sirin 70.

those which we have discussed so far. Eventually, the dream also contributes to the unity of the story, since it foregrounds the chief motif of both plots, that is, money.[189]

The dream motif in *The Merchant of Venice* is a clear example of how a traditional and well-worn literary convention might be transformed into an ingenious technical device which significantly influences the atmosphere of a dramatic work and contributes to the complexity of one of its main protagonists. It is also an illustration of the different ways in which modern audiences can interpret the same dramatic situation – that is, whether it is understood in or out of the reconstructed context of the original culture.

### 3. 4 Significative Dreams in Shakespeare's Late Plays

The last period when Shakespeare inclined towards significative dreams as a technical device in his plays was around the year 1610, during the last phase of his dramatic career. As we have observed, during his professional life, Shakespeare's use of dreams gradually shifted from a clearly structural tool to a rather conventional, somewhat less dramatically effective and apparently more ornamental element of his works. As we shall see, this tendency continued in the dramatist's later plays, in which significative dreams to a large extent lost their original form of reported symbolical warnings and more attention was paid to their visual representation, facilitating new artistic tastes and demands.

The first of the plays of this group to use the dream motif is the semi-apocryphal *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. At the end of the penultimate scene, King Pericles, having been reunited with his long-lost daughter, Marina, sees in sleep the goddess Diana, who gives him rather cryptic instructions:

> *Diana.* My temple stands in Ephesus. Hie thee thither,
> And do upon mine altar sacrifice.
> There when my maiden priests are met together,
> At large discourse thy fortunes in this wise:
> With a full voice before the people all,
> Reveal how thou at sea didst lose thy wife.
> To mourn thy crosses, with thy daughter's, call
> And give them repetition to the life.
> Perform my bidding, or thou liv'st in woe;
> Do't, and rest happy, by my silver bow.
> Awake, and tell thy dream.
> (sc. 21, ll. 224–34)

[189] We must not forget that Bassanio's voyage to Belmont was predominantly motivated by his financial need, as he confides to Antonio in Act 1, Scene 1 (ll. 122ff).

Pericles decides to obey Diana's advice. He goes to the temple of Ephesus, where he tells his story, including the details of his daughter and mourned wife. Thaisa, one of the priestesses, overhears the speech and reveals herself as the supposedly dead queen. The happy reunion of the family after years of misery and suffering marks the finale of the play.

From the formal aspect, the dream episode is significantly different from those we have discussed so far. The dream has a clearly supernatural origin and assumes the form of divine guidance, not dissimilar to the mediaeval dramatic tradition (see Chapter 2. 2 of the present study). The validity of the message is never questioned, and immediately after his awakening, Pericles informs Helicanus that he will not go to Tarsus, since he has to attend to "other service first" (l. 239). At the same time, we may discern several points of similarities with the previous examples. The dreamer is not fully informed of the meaning or purpose of his dream, whereas the audience know that Pericle's wife Thaisa is alive and has joined Diana's order. The scene is accompanied by "most heav'nly music" (l. 218), which, as we have already discussed in the example of *King Lear*, is a dramatic sign of reconciliation or reversal from misery to joy (see Chapter 2. 4). Another parallel with *King Lear* offers itself, namely the recapitulative character of the dramatic situation. As we have observed, when Cordelia watches her father sleeping, she recounts the past misfortunes which he confronted before he reunited with his daughter. In *Pericles*, Diana prompts the King to tell his story in order to meet again with his wife.

Structurally, the dream, despite its highly stylised form, is an effective instrument to resolve an intractable situation, caused by the generous treatment of time and space in the previous plot – the characters are scattered in several places of the world and need to be reunited. A supernatural intervention is, in this respect, an elegant way to finish the story without extensive demands for the narrative. It is accurate to say that Diana's appearance in Pericles's dream is the most traditional dramatic device, the *deus* (or, in this case, rather *dea*) *ex machina*. Its rôle in the play's composition is very much active and indispensable for the successful dramatic end of the story.

The same masque-like treatment of a dream is also present in Shakespeare's slightly later romance *Cymbeline*. Having submitted himself to the British armies of King Cymbeline, Posthumus Leonatus, disguised as a Roman soldier, awaits execution in a prison cell. When he falls asleep, he is visited by the ghost of his relatives and the god Jupiter on an eagle, who promises to intervene personally so that all will be well (5. 5. 124–216). As a

token of his will, he leaves with Posthumus a book, whose text Cymbeline's adopted son upon his awakening cannot understand.

There has been some controversy as to whether Shakespeare was really the author of this passage, which is rhymed and written in a then long-outmoded metre. J. M. Nosworthy advocated the authenticity of the masque, claiming that the rapid change of fortune of both whole armies and individuals at the end of the play indeed calls for a supernatural intervention, a *deus ex machina* – similar to that in *Pericles*.[190] Martin Butler asserts that the crude and obscure language of the dream visitors serves to create an impression of "another, less spacious dramatic world".[191] This might be an accurate observation, since, as we have seen, the language of the goddess Diana from Pericles's dream, too, is obviously different and more stylised than the language of the reality outside the "dream-world". This attribute of ghostly visitations seems to be typical of the late Shakespeare, since ghosts of his earlier plays, who visited sleepers in represented dreams, showed no difference from the rest of the characters in this respect.

Shakespeare's return to older dramatic forms does not, however, seem to be limited to the language of the dream appearances. The prison scene in Cymbeline bears similarities to the treatment of dreams by John Lyly, who, we have mentioned, was the chief pre-Shakespearian dramatist to employ dream motifs in his plays. In his *Endimion*, there is a dumb-show representing the dream of the title character of the play:

> *Music sounds.* […] *Enters an ancient* Man *with books with three leaves, offers the same twice. Endymion refuseth. He rendeth two and offers the third, where he stands a while, and then Endymion offers to take it.*
>
> (end of 2. 3)

Although Lyly's dream is less germane to the plot of his play, being a symbolical presentation of a contemporary political situation,[192] the stress on the visual presentation of the dream (accompanied in *Cymbeline*, too, by "solemn music" and other stage effects) and the motif of the book received from the apparition, containing allegorical guidance, point at the possible inspiration of the execution of Shakespeare's masque in the work of his older colleague.

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[190] See J. M. Nosworthy, Introduction, in *Cymbeline*, by William Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1955) xxxvii.

[191] Martin Butler, Introduction, in *Cymbeline*, by William Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005) 15.

[192] See Warwick Bond's introduction to the play in John Lyly, *Endimion*, in *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, Vol. 3, ed. R. Warwick Bond (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1902) 7–15, and his commentary upon the dumb show on p. 509. On the political themes in the play, see also David Bevington's introduction to his edition of the play, pp. 1–72 at 27–35.

Posthumus's dream is closely connected with another, earlier dream episode in the play. Prior to the coming battle between England and Rome over a three thousand pound tribute to Rome which Cymbeline refuses to pay, the commander of the Roman soldiers asks the soothsayer Philharmonus about the outcome. The soothsayer replies:

> *Soothsayer.* Last night the very gods showed me a vision –
> I fast and prayed for their intelligence – thus:
> I saw Jove's bird, the Roman eagle, winged
> From the spongy south to this part of the west,
> There vanished in the sunbeams; which portends,
> Unless my sins abuse my divination,
> Success to th' Roman host.
> *Lucius.* Dream often so,
> And never false.
> (4. 2. 348–55)

The prophecy is, however, fulfilled in a surprising manner: although the Romans lose the battle, Cymbeline, overjoyed with meeting with his long-lost sons and his daughter, frees all the Roman prisoners and resumes the tribute, declaring his friendship to Rome (5. 6). At the end of the play, Philharmonus interprets the omens of both his and Posthumus's dreams together and claims that his initial nocturnal vision is "full accomplished" (5. 6. 470), since

> [*Soothsayer.*] […] the Roman eagle,
> From south to west on wing soaring aloft,
> Lessened herself, and in the beams o'th' sun
> So vanished; which foreshadowed our princely eagle,
> Th'imperial Caesar, should again unite
> His favour with the radiant Cymbeline,
> Which shines here in the west.
> (ll. 468–74)

Although the soothsayer's prophecy displays certain features associated with the previously mentioned dream prophecies, especially in the initial misleading interpretation, it is, from the dramatic point of view, fundamentally different. First, the message of the dream does not have the form of a warning. In spite of the fact that the prophecy itself poses a threat to Britain, no one from the British camp hears it and thus cannot either understand or misunderstand it. The dramatic irony ensuing from misinterpreted or spurned prophecies is absent in this case. Moreover, the dream does not refer to anything from the expository material or previous events and the audience cannot pass any judgement as to its veracity. The reliability of such a vision remains unclear and no dramatic suspense is thus produced. To interpret properly the function of the prophecy, the soothsayer's name might be helpful: Philharmonus literally means a lover of music or rather, in this case, a lover of harmony. The gods who showed Philharmonus his vision and who visited

Posthumus in prison intervene to restore harmony both in the fictitious world and, as Nosworthy notes, the play itself. The dream, more than ever before, becomes a medium through which the ordinary world is penetrated by another one, which actively, before the eyes of the audience, interferes with the fortunes of the characters and the entire plots. The narrative aspect of the dreams is much more foregrounded than in earlier plays: nocturnal visions are no longer vague, symbolical images, but independent stories, affecting and interpreting the events outside the dream world.

These observations are to a large extent applicable to the last significative dream written by Shakespeare in this period. In Act 3, Scene 3 of *The Winter's Tale*, Antigonus, having arrived from Sicily in Bohemia with the little princess, whom he is ordered by King Leontes to abandon in some remote place, gives an account of the disturbing vision he had the previous night. He was visited by the apparition of the dead Queen Hermione "In pure white robes" (l. 21), who instructed him to sail to Bohemia and leave the baby there.[193] She also urged him to call the girl Perdita and informed the lord that for "this ungentle business" (l. 33), that is, for disposing of the baby, he will never see his wife again. Although Antigonus considers dreams as "toys" (l. 38), he claims that in this case, "ne'er was dream / So like a waking" (ll. 17f) and that "for this once, yea superstitiously, / [He] will be squared by this" (ll. 39f).

The "superstition" soon proves to be right: once Antigonus fulfils the Queen's wishes, he is indeed killed by a bear. Whereas the spirits, the *dei ex machina*, of *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, are used to solve complicated problems in order to conclude their respective stories, in *The Winter's Tale*, the same device serves as a means of dramatic complication and the solution is delegated to the characters of the story themselves. Although the dream is not actually presented on the stage, Antigonus's report contains enough detail to create a clear verbal image of the event. From the account of the nocturnal experience it becomes furthermore obvious that the dream episode foreshadows one of the most enigmatic scenes of both *The Winter's Tale* and Shakespeare's dramatic canon, that is, the supposed animation of the dead Queen's statue in 5. 3.

[193] Alfred Thomas speculates about the reason why Shakespeare reversed the settings of *The Winter's Tale*, as opposed to Robert Greene's 1588 romance *Pandosto*, thus making a rather silly geographical mistake by placing Bohemia on the seashore. Thomas suggests that the Rudolfine model of tolerance would have been known to Shakespeare's English contemporaries, making Bohemia a more logical place of refuge for Perdita (as it was for people like Elizabeth Jane Weston and her family). See Alfred Thomas, *A Blessed Shore: England and Bohemia from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2007) 193–95. I am grateful to Professor Thomas for bringing this argument to my attention.

Just as the status of the simulacrum in the play is never fully explained, the nature of Antigonus's dream remains uncertain as well. If the scene of reconciliation of Hermione and Leontes is just Paulina's deceit and the Queen was never really dead, how could her spirit appear to Antigonus and accurately predict his fate? But if the dream was not an illusion and the Queen was indeed dead, how could she return to life? In the same way that Antigonus observes that "ne'er was dream / So like a waking", Paulina maintains that the likeness of the statue of Hermione "Excels what ever yet you looked upon" (5. 3. 16). The (from the rational point of view) unreal image in both cases makes sensible characters question their belief paradigms and succumb to "superstition": Antigonus "superstitiously" obeys the orders he received in his dream, while Princess Perdita kneels before the statue, asking everyone present "not [to] say 'tis superstition" (l. 43).

In his insightful discussion of the final scene of the play, Walter S. H. Lim suggests that the multiple questions without answers in *The Winter's Tale* reflect the tension between the Catholic and Protestant belief systems coexisting alongside one another, intertwining "the narrative of faith and its miraculous possibilities with a discourse of doubt and radical uncertainty".[194] In other words, the audience are at a loss whether to accept the possibility of miracles, including miraculous dreams, which were associated with "superstitious Papists", or whether to remain faithful to a Protestant view that they "must not looke to be taught by visions and dreames". Elizabeth Williamson, although not directly addressing the possibility of the miraculous events in *The Winter's Tale* being mere illusions, referred in her study of the post-Reformation depiction of resurrection on the English stage to the problematic religious interpretation of the final scene as well. She asserts that

> the play presents a barrier to the audience's straightforward enjoyment of the performance, as the characters return again and again to the question of whether Paulina's incarnations are 'lawful' spells or dangerous works of witchcraft.[195]

The dilemma is never resolved and the interpretation of both the finale of the play and Antigonus's dream, neither of which should, realistically, have taken place, remains open.

The tension between scepticism about any form of miracles and the readiness to believe in them is an essential component of all dream prophecies in Shakespearian plays. The audience, just like the characters on the stage, are at all times aware of the possibility

[194] Walter S. H. Lim, "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*", *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 41 (2001): 317–34 at 321.

[195] Elizabeth Williamson, "'Things Newly Performed': Tomb Properties and the Survival of the Dramatic Tradition", in *The Materiality of Religion in Early-Modern English Drama* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) 33–69 at 65.

that dreams may or may not become true. It is precisely this uncertainty that makes oneiric phenomena such a powerful technical device, which – when properly employed – is able to generate desired dramatic suspense and capture the attention of theatregoers. Moreover, despite the religiously sensitive cultural context, significative dreams were consistent with beliefs held by the majority of early modern English society and their presence on the stage reminded spectators of the omnipresent power of the Supernatural, which watched, touched and shaped every aspect of their everyday lives.

# 4 Nocturnal Life in Shakespeare

> Ich bin die dunkle Nacht, die alles schlafend macht,
> Ich bin des Morpheus Weib, der Laster Zeitvertreib,
> Ich bin der Diebe Schutz, und der Geliebten Trutz,
> Ich bin die dunkle Nacht, und hab in meiner Macht,
> Die Bosheit auszuüben, die Menschen zu betrüben,
> Mein Mantel decket zu der Huren Schand' und Ruh'[.]

> (I am the sable Night, all feel in sleep my might, / Of Morpheus I'm the wife, in vicious pleasures rife; / I'm guardian of the thief, I bring to love relief, / I am the sable Night, who have it in my might / All wickedness to do, and cause mankind to rue. / Concealed my veil shall keep the harlot's shame and sleep.)

(*Der bestrafte Brudermord oder Prinz Hamlet aus Dannemark*, Prologue 1–6)[1]

## 4. 1 Shakespearian Terrors of the Night

In his monograph on the perception of the night in early modern Europe, Craig Koslofsky draws attention to the "ongoing expansion of the legitimate social and symbolic uses of the night" in the period – a phenomenon which he calls "nocturnalisation".[2] New discoveries in the field of astronomy explaining the nature of the night led to its partial redefinition in cultural and intellectual contexts, causing shifts in society's attitude to the nocturnal world. These were manifested, on the one hand, by new impulses in social life after dark (especially in towns), such as coffeehouses and evening theatre performances, and, on the other hand, by the intensified notion of the diabolical, and more generally supernatural, aspect of the night-time. Koslofsky observes that the history of the early modern night is peculiarly dual, "both devilish and divine, restful and restive, disciplined and ungovernable".[3]

When introducing the topic of his discourse to the readers of *The Terrors of the Night*, Thomas Nashe stressed a similar duality in the nature of the night, referring to both its special cultural and literary associations. "Well have the Poets tearmd night the nurse of cares," remarked Nashe, "the mother of despaire, the daughter of hell".[4] Although Nashe's text is not specific about any of the "poets" to whom it refers, both welcoming and contemptuous notions of the night pervaded the canon of high literature of the time. Ovid,

[1] *Tragedy of Fratricide Punished or Prince Hamlet of Denmark*, in *Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. and trans. Albert Cohn (London: Asher, 1865) 237–304.

[2] Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011) 2.

[3] Koslofsky 5.

[4] Nashe 346.

a powerful source of inspiration to early modern English authors, at one point called the night the "most powerful healer of our cares [*curarum maxima nutrix*]",[5] using virtually the same language as in his description of the beneficial powers of sleep (*Metamorphoses* 11. 623–25; see Chapter 2. 1 of the present study). Geoffrey Chaucer, likewise, in the *Parliament of Fowls*, stressed the beneficiary powers of "the derke night", asserting that it "reveth bestes from hir besynesse" (ll. 85f). Edmund Spenser, in contrast, foregrounded the night's dark, Hesiodic side, calling it the "Foule mother of annoyaunce sad" and "nourse of woe, / Which was begot in heaven, but for [her] bad / And brutish shape thrust downe to hell below".[6] A strange position of the night in Greek mythology is suggested by Homer: when, in Book XIV of the *Iliad*, Hypnos, "sovereign of gods and all mankind",[7] lulls Zeus to sleep to help the Achaeans, the furious Zeus does not punish Sleep only because the latter has found refuge with his mother – "all-subduing Night, mistress of gods and men" – and Zeus is afraid of "doing a displeasure to swift Night".[8] The night, although a regular companion to both mortals and immortals, was thus feared even by the highest deities. For Nashe himself and, by extension, for his readers, the night was first and foremost "that ill angel the Rauen, which neuer commeth back to bring good tidings and tranquilitie" and "a time most fatall and unhallowed".[9]

As a period of rest, the night was considered to be a time when men were most susceptible to temptations and evil exercises of the devil, who "will one by one assaile in their sleepe".[10] In this respect, we can mention here once more the views of the Puritan William Perkins, who asserted that, by dreaming, "we may gesse […] often times at the sinnes whereunto we are inclined".[11] This remark, although made from a different perspective to Nashe's, corroborates the early modern belief in the potentially dangerous – and evil – nature of the nocturnal world. Whereas, according to Shakespeare's Mercutio, sleepers were at night visited by the diminutive Queen Mab, who brought them dreams by touching various parts of their bodies, Nashe's view of such events was much less poetic and far darker. To his mind, it was in fact tiny daemons that compromised the sleepers' unprotected bodies: "Infinite millions of them wil hang swarming about a worm-eaten nose. […] Vpon a haire they will sit like a nit, and ouer-dredge a bald pate like a white

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5 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8. 81.

6 Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene, Books Three and Four*, ed. Dorothy Stephens (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2006) 87 = 3. 4. 55.

7 Homer, *The Iliad*, 246 = 14. 233.

8 Homer, *The Iliad*, 247 = 14. 259, 261.

9 Nashe 346.

10 Nashe 348.

11 Perkins 222.

scurffe".[12] The early modern concept of the night was therefore closely connected with contemporary ambivalent notions of sleeping and dreaming.[13]

Lyrical poetry of the time often made use of the established set of night's cultural connotations and the motif frequently ceased to designate a merely temporal entity, but rather represented the speakers' entire inner – or outer – world. Henry Petowe, in his continuation to Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1598), rather conventionally attributes to the eponymous heroine a beauty which "makes night day againe"[14] – meaning that the pleasurable sensation which the sight of Hero offers, metaphorically associated with daytime, has the power to outweigh all the anxieties and sorrows of the lyrical subject of the poem, associated with the image of the night. In Sonnet 89 of his *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney elaborates upon the same theme, comparing the absence of the day-giving Stella to "the most irksome night" (l. 1). Since Stella's eyes have left the speaker's "Hemisphere", they left his entire world "in night" (l. 4). Even literal days have become unbearable, since "no night is more darke then is my [*i.e.*, the speaker's] day" (l. 11), and the lyrical subject of the poem is thus doomed to suffer "the evils both of the day and night" (l. 9). Although Sidney's sonnet plays with both ordinary and metaphorical images of day and night, it is clear that the metaphorical meanings attributed to the topoi are given more weight, since the "state" of the day or the night, as it were, surpasses both day and night as mere periods of time.

Shakespeare returns to the day and night imagery in Sonnet 27, in which a lover, by means of his "soul's imaginary sight" (l. 9; for the discussion of the soul's capacity of dreaming, see Chapter 2. 1), sees the face of his loved one, "Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night / Makes black night beauteous and her old face new" (ll. 11–12). In Sonnet 28, dreams of his lover prevent the lyrical subject from the benefits of rest. The image of the loved one seems to have power both over days and nights in their ordinary sense, since it is able, on the one hand, to brighten the day when "clouds do blot the heaven" (l. 10) and gild the "swart-complexioned night" (l. 11) when the stars are obscured – in other words, to create a "day" regardless of the actual time – but, on the other hand, during the image's absence, "day doth daily draw my [*i.e.*, the speaker's] sorrows longer, / And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger" (ll. 13–14) – that is, the metaphorical night assumes the full control of the speaker's world. Finally, in Sonnet 43, the same idea is

[12] Nashe 349.
[13] For a more detailed discussion of the connection between the history of the early-modern night and the history of early-modern sleeping, see Koslofsky 6. Upon the same topic, see Lucy Worsley, *If Walls Could Talk: An Intimate History of the Home* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011) 95–99.
[14] Henry Petowe, *The Second Part of Hero and Leander* (London: Thomas Purfoot for Andrew Harris, 1598) sig. B3$^{v}$.

addressed directly, when the speaker describes the night as a potential opportunity to see his lover in dreams, concluding that "All days are nights to see till I see thee, / All nights bright days when dreams do show me thee" (ll. 13–14).

In all the examples mentioned above, the night has lost much of its temporal quality to become rather an allegorical environment, a *chronotope*,[15] alternative to the neutral daily world, with its own rules, being able to establish a peculiar mood, produce a certain kind of situation and generate certain expectations on the readers' side. The notion of the night being a kind of spatial locus is suggested even by Nashe, when he asserts that "the diuell is a special predominant Planet of the night, and […] our creator for our punishment hath allotted it him as his peculiar segniorie and kingdome".[16]

A similar shift in the meaning of the image of the night is discernible in dramatic works of the period. When discussing the concept of the so-called "double time" in Shakespeare's plays (which he subjects to considerable criticism), Emrys Jones notes that the motif of the night, as employed by Shakespeare, needs often to be read not in terms of a temporal duration, but from the point of view of the night's "metaphorical or emblematical character".[17] An example which Jones gives is *Julius Caesar*. When, in scene 1. 3, the conspirators put their plan to dispose of Caesar into motion, the event takes place stylishly in the middle of an unnaturally stormy night:

> [*Casca.*] O Cicero,
> I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
> Have rived the knotty oaks, and I have seen
> Th' ambitious ocean swell and rage and foam
> To be exalted with the threatening clouds;
> But never till tonight, never till now,
> Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
> Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
> Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
> Incenses them to send destruction.
> (1. 3. 4–13)

Although Cassius, the chief conspirator, sees in the heavenly signs a prompt to kill Caesar ("a man most like this dreadful night", l. 72) – thus making a similarly false statement as Decius will make about Calpurnia's ominous dream – Brutus, in the scene to follow

[15] I am using Bakhtin's term with some liberty here. Whereas he defines the *chronotope* (хронотоп) as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" and "the organizing [centre] for the fundamental narrative events […,] the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (see M. M. Bakhin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel", in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist [Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 1981] 84–258 at 84 and 250), I am rather using it for an originally temporal entity which, when specifically employed by the author, assumes some characteristics of a spatial locus, being able to fulfil in a narrative the rôles of both a temporal and spatial category.

[16] Nashe 346.

[17] Emrys Jones 47.

(which takes place on the same night), rightly connects the uncanny quality of the night with the plotters' shameful intentions:

> [*Brutus.*] O conspiracy,
> Sham'st thou to show thy gang'rous brow by night,
> When evils are most free?
> (2. 1. 77–79)

Jones argues that Shakespeare had in fact "no reason other than an imaginative one" to place the conspiracy at night and continues to elaborate on the idea, explaining that "night was appropriate to such enterprises as a plot to murder Julius Caesar".[18] Thus, apart from producing atmosphere for certain enterprises, the motif of the night might also become a dramaturgical principle: while the appropriate setting for some advancements of the plot is the day-time, for others it is nocturnal darkness.

A parallel to the ominous nocturnal signs from *Julius Caesar* can be seen in Macbeth's already discussed waking vision of the floating dagger, presaging the murder of King Duncan (the concepts of night and nightmare thus become almost interchangeable), and the unnatural night which would envelope Scotland after the regicide (see Chapter 2. 7 of the present study). The notion of the night being a particularly suitable setting for a dark deed is also echoed by Hamlet, when, upon finally securing the long-awaited evidence of Claudius' guilt, the Prince expresses a belief that the ideal time to take action has arrived:

> [*Hamlet.*] 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on.
> (*Hamlet* 3. 2. 377–81)

In the spirit of the moment, Hamlet stylises himself into the rôle of a revenger and verbally creates an appropriate atmosphere for his new part. Although the audience know it is night, Hamlet's utterance fills the scene with additional meaning, directly reflecting the momentary state of his mind and the dramatic situation in progress. As we shall discuss below, the night when Hamlet pronounces these words indeed becomes crucial for the development of the central plot of the play.

It is again Nashe's treatise that testifies to the popularity (maybe even the overuse) of the deployments of the night as a scene for particular events not only with Shakespeare, but among early modern authors in general: "When anie Poet would describe a horrible Tragicall accident," argued Nashe, "to adde the more probabilitie & credence vnto it, he

[18] Ibid.

dismally beginneth to tell, how it was darke night when it was done, and cheerfull daylight had quite abandoned the firmament".[19] If we stay for a moment with *Hamlet*, we realise that the motif of the night is, indeed, not limited to one conventional observation (as quoted above), which contributes to the mood of the specific dramatic situation, but that the nocturnal world in the play receives a more extensive treatment.

When Hamlet's erstwhile university friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, arrive in Demark and first meet with the Prince, Hamlet, rather cryptically, tells his comrades that his homeland has become a "prison" to him because he has been suffering from "bad dreams" (2. 2. 237, 249f). Whereas Stewart attributes Hamlet's remark to his generally melancholic nature, claiming that "it is one of the commonplaces of Renaissance psychology that melancholy men are habitually afflicted with terrible dreams",[20] he seems to misinterpret Hamlet's statement in the same manner as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern themselves, who assert that the Prince's dreams spring from his regal ambitions, which are – just like dreams – "but a shadow's shadow" (l. 255).

Indeed, although Hamlet at one point admits to "[his] weakness and [his] melancholy" (2. 2. 578), nowhere in the text do we find a suggestion that he experiences dreams in the literal sense. Early on in the play, the audience, however, learn that Hamlet has personal visions which no-one seems to be able to see. Whereas the entire court accepts King Hamlet's death as a common necessity of life, Hamlet is the only one to whom it not only does not "seem" particular, but to whom it "is" such (1. 2. 75f). To Hamlet's mind, while he by mourning shows true respect to the memory of his father, others are not able to appreciate the legacy of the great king and even their sorrow is just "the trappings and the suits of woe" (l. 86). While everyone turns their attention to the Fortinbras affair – with which Claudius deals with the confidence and competence of a true king – Hamlet is the only one who considers his uncle not as a great king but a lustful satyr (l. 140). Although not having any tangible evidence of the presence of a hidden evil, Hamlet feels that something is wrong with the world in which he lives, claiming that all its business is "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" and comparing it to "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed" (ll. 133, 135f). The first encounter with the ghost of his father confirms his vague suspicions, at which point Hamlet exclaims, "O my prophetic soul!" (1. 5. 41), giving thus his previous observations (according to early modern belief) a clearly "dreamy" quality.

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[19] Nashe 386.
[20] Stewart, "Characterization Through Dreams", 33.

The "bad dreams" to which Hamlet refers before his schoolfellows therefore need to be read as a metaphor for the hidden darkness of the physical world. Naoe Takei asserts that "[t]he dreams here are no longer casual, interchangeable images", but "the protagonist's visions of man and the world, establishing in his mind a more powerful reality than any apparent and material one".[21] The prison – a product of these visions – is then, in Takei's words, "a place where evil is confined".[22] The nocturnal image of dreaming in *Hamlet* thus assumes a similar meaning as the motif of the night in *Macbeth*. In *Macbeth*, however, the night becomes an external manifestation of a very tangible evil and ugliness, impersonated by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, whereas in *Hamlet*, the image takes the form of private metaphoric nightmares, which prompt the protagonist to seek the concealed reality to which they refer. In terms of dramatic syntax, the ugly night in *Macbeth* appears when the most fundamental action of the play has already taken place, its symbolical meaning being clear to the audience. In *Hamlet*, in contrast, it stands at the very beginning of the plot and the audience have to wait (just like Hamlet) for the revelation of its true nature.

Apart from this figurative meaning, the night in its ordinary sense enters the composition of the play as well. *Hamlet* contains three nocturnal scenes: the very first words pronounced by Barnardo in the first scene of the play ("Who's there?", 1. 1. 1) are already, so to speak, a cry in the dark, setting the mood of the play. Another fictional night takes place not long afterwards, in scenes 1. 4 and 1. 5. Finally, the last one stretches from Act 3, Scene 2 to Act 4, Scene 4, occupying more than a fifth of the entire piece.

The first night, marking Horatio's meeting with the sentinels at a guard post before Elsinore, is mainly filled with dialogue with little action and, as such, is a good source of expository material. Some of the main arguments of the play are presented at this point for the first time. From the conversation, the audience learn that Denmark has recently undergone a royal succession and it finds itself on the threshold of war with Norway. From the single mention of "young Hamlet" (l. 151), the viewers can deduce that it is not the late King's son who replaced the late monarch on the throne, since in that case, Horatio would surely use the phrase "King Hamlet". We are, furthermore, given valuable insight into the history of the country so that we could understand the political status quo at the beginning of the play and also make an image of the dead King Hamlet, "the majesty of buried Denmark" (1. 1. 46), whose loss Hamlet mourns so much. In Act 5 of the play, we learn

[21] Naoe Takei, "Dreams as Metaphysical Visions: A Study of Shakespeare's Major Tragedies", *Shakespeare Studies* 8 (1969–1970): 18–47 at 21.

[22] Takei 19.

that some of the events of the past, to which Horatio refers in this first scene, happened, symbolically, on the same day that Prince Hamlet was born. The crucial character of young Fortinbras is also established – and although the Norwegian prince plays, in terms of actual playing space, only an episodic rôle, his presence as Hamlet's foil and, eventually, his successor is felt strongly in the entire course of the play. To convey all these details within a reasonable playing space, a predominantly dialogic scene is necessary. Guards, watching in the middle of a still night, waiting for time to pass, provide a plausible dramatic opportunity for it.

The most fundamental feature of the first nocturnal scene of *Hamlet* is, however, the first appearance of the ghost, who will later prompt the action in the central plot of the play. Drábek has noted how much effort Shakespeare invests in the preparations for the event.[23] Until the very last moment, the audience are left in ignorance as to the character of the entity which the watchmen are discussing with great excitation. Marcellus asks whether "*this thing* appeared again tonight" (l. 19; italics mine), and continues to call the spectre "but our fantasy", "this dreaded sight" and "this apparition" (ll. 21–26), placing it in the uncanny realm of nightmares rather than everyday reality. Horatio then expresses the conviction that "*'t*will not appear" (l. 27; italics mine). No direct clue of the identity of the "dreaded sight" is given[24] and the spectators thus have to wait for the physical entry of "this thing" on the stage to find out what it was that scared Marcellus on the previous night.

Even after the ghost's appearance, however, the mystery of the figure's nature remains largely unresolved. Marcellus and others continue to call it by the impersonal "it" rather than the more appropriate "he", and hesitate to identify the ghost as King Hamlet. To them, the apparition is merely "In the same figure like the King that's dead" (l. 39), being only "like the King" (l. 57) and the King's "image" (l. 80). The most important dilemma of the first half of the play is thus for the first time presented to the audience: is the ghost truly young Hamlet's father or a daemon disguised as the late King? Hamlet himself, a student at a Protestant university,[25] is vexed by this question, since he is aware

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[23] See Pavel Drábek, Introduction, in *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, trans. František Nevrla (Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2005) 5–35 at 15–19.

[24] Drábek asserts that the word "apparition", which in early-modern English could have been, as it is nowadays, understood as synonymous to "ghost", was in Shakespeare's time a learned term, to which most of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatregoers probably could not assign a specific meaning (see Drábek, Introduction, 16). John Russell Brown is, however, of a different opinion, suggesting that "Marcellus, with 'fantasy... dreaded... apparition' begins to clarify his earlier 'thing'" (John Russell Brown, *Hamlet: A Guide to the Text and Its Theatrical Life* [Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006] 32).

[25] John Dover Wilson argues that, unlike for Hamlet, the acceptance of a ghost returning from purgatorial flames would, for an ordinary Elizabethan, not necessarily contradict his belief system since purgatory was "the place of departed spirits in which post-medieval England, despite a veneer of Protestantism, still

that "The spirit that [he has] seen / May be the devil, and the devil hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape" (2. 2. 575–77). Only after the production of "The Murder of Gonzago" in scene 3. 2, during which Claudius convinces himself of the regicide, is Hamlet ready to admit that he will "take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound" (ll. 263f) and the question of the ghost's veracity is never raised again. Even after this point, however, the mystery of the identity of the apparition is not fully settled and the audience do not in the end learn whether the first impulse to the tragedy came from the forces of good or evil.[26]

The second night-scene takes place on the consecutive day, marking the first encounter of the ghost and young Hamlet. The very timing of the scene seems to be of importance here: from scene 1. 1, we know that the ghost's stay in the world of mortals is limited to nocturnal hours; from Barnardo's report we have learned that the spectre's two previous appearances took place at night, when "the bell [was] beating one" (l. 37),[27] and Horatio explains that, with the cock's crow, "Th'extravagant and erring spirit hies / To his confine" (ll. 134f). The night is therefore not only the most appropriate setting for meeting with the ghost, but also the only possible one. As Grebanier asserts, the fact that Hamlet is eager to speak to the ghost on the very first occasion after he learns about its existence ("Would the night were come. / Till then, sit still, my soul", 1. 2. 255f) testifies to the Prince's resoluteness rather than a tendency to procrastinate, which is commonly ascribed to him.[28]

During the conversation with the ghost, Hamlet (and the audience) learns that Claudius not only seduced Gertrude into an incestuous (by the standards of the time) relationship (a fact with which Hamlet was already acquainted and which he deeply despised), but that he also committed a murder "most foul, strange, and unnatural" (1. 5. 38), that is, that he killed his royal brother in sleep (for the motif of killing a character in sleep in Shakespeare, see Chapter 2). Hamlet's first *contemptus mundi* speech in scene 1. 2

believed at the end of the sixteenth century" (see John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1935] 56). For a comprehensive history of the concept of purgatory and its employment in *Hamlet*, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2001).

[26] See, for instance, Drábek, Introduction, 18. Greenblatt, however, argues that Shakespeare's ghosts are to be taken not so much as products of a specific religious or cultural framework, but, first and foremost, as "good theatre", being able to supply the story with the necessary dramatic impetus and generate an eerie atmosphere for the situation (see Greenblatt 151–204).

[27] One o'clock in the morning was considered as a particularly dark time in the early-modern period. Cf. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, in which the eponymous character is massacred by devils "twixt the hours of twelve and one" (B-text, sc. 13a, l. 9).

[28] See Bernard Grebanier, *The Heart of Hamlet* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1960) 160. John Jones argues that the (to a large degree false) idea of Hamlet's extensive procrastination originated with Lewis Theobald's 1733 edition of conflated *Hamlet*, based on Q2 and F1 versions – "a play [Shakespeare] never wrote and which had never been acted" (John Jones 127). Jones maintains that, in the Folio version alone, the theme is still present, but "has been brought into balance and made more justly ponderable within a larger frame" (John Jones 136).

("O that this too solid flesh would melt") is therefore proved not to have been a vain construct of a melancholy mind, as Hamlet himself perhaps initially suspected, but an insightful glimpse behind the façade of deceit. At this point, Hamlet also learns of his task: if he has any natural feeling in him, he must not let "the royal bed of Denmark be / A couch for luxury and damnèd incest" (ll. 82f). Whereas the first nocturnal scene provided the dramatic narrative with an ideal occasion to furnish the audience with enough foreknowledge before the action proper, the second night-scene provides the necessary impetus to set this action in motion. Grebanier maintains that, in terms of the plot, the ghost is "one of the persons most essential" to it, and that Hamlet's need to decide about its reliability before he follows its instruction "forms one of the ground elements of the plot during the first half of the play" (*i.e.*, up to "The Murder of Gonzago").[29] In other words, without this particular scene, the story could not possibly begin.

It is not surprising that, for the climactic sequence in the middle of the play, Shakespeare again stylishly chooses, in Hamlet's own words, "the very witching time of night". Hamlet has seized the opportunity which presented itself by the arrival of the players in 2. 2 and arranged a performance at court which would re-enact the circumstances of King Hamlet's murder according to the ghost's account. When the play is offered on the following night, King Claudius is alarmed, at which point Polonius dismisses the performance and everyone, except for Hamlet and Horatio, storms out of the room. Hamlet now knows that he can trust the ghost's words (indeed, Claudius, in a later soliloquy, confesses that his crime "smells to heaven", 3. 3. 36) and the question of the spectre's reliability, occupying Hamlet's mind in the course of the first half of the play, is superseded by the problem of how to bring the King to justice. In spite of his intemperate words about drinking hot blood, the Prince resists the temptation to kill Claudius at prayer, claiming that he would rather kill him in the same manner as Claudius killed old Hamlet: unprepared (cf. Evadne's desire not to kill the King sleeping, but with "The number of his wrongs and punishments" lain before him; see Chapter 2. 2). Another aspect contributing to Hamlet's decision to postpone the revenge might be the ghost's specific instruction to "Taint not [his, *i.e.*, young Hamlet's] mind" (1. 5. 85) when executing his plan, which would be incompatible with a cold-blooded murder. The ghost never explicitly demanded that Hamlet kill Claudius – he first and foremost wanted his son to restore the Christian order in the kingdom.[30]

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[29] Grebanier, *The Heart of Hamlet*, 158.

[30] To this argument, Jerah Johnson adds that, according to the Tudor concept of kingship, Claudius, although a murderer, "was now a king, and as king, absolved of the crime", concluding that "[t]o kill the king

Hamlet's thoughtlessness, however, irremediably crosses his plans in the scene to follow (still taking place on the same night), when the Prince kills Polonius hidden behind a tapestry in the Queen's closet. The ghost of old Hamlet has to intervene and remind his son of his "almost blunted purpose" (3. 4. 101). Hamlet realises that he has made a fatal mistake and that the murder of Polonius will allow his uncle to have him disposed of by finally sending him to England, as Claudius had planned before ("This man [*i.e.*, Polonius] shall set me packing", l. 186). This development will, however, prevent Hamlet from executing the ghost's will. The Prince is, indeed, immediately sent to board the ship together with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who act, as Hamlet knows, as the King's spies rather than the Prince's schoolfellows. On the way to the port, Hamlet encounters the passing Norwegian army (in the Q2 version only), and when he learns that the soldiers are going to risk their lives in a war for "a little patch of ground / That hath in it no profit but the name" (4. 4. 9. 7f), he expresses a firm resolution to complete his task, accepting murder as a necessary means ("O, from this time forth, / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!", ll. 9. 55f). With this thought, the longest – and most turbulent – night of the play ends.

It becomes apparent that Shakespeare divided the narrative material of *Hamlet* into two distinct settings: the main advancements in the central plot are assigned to the realm of night, while the daytime scenes are, as it were, a preparation for them.[31] Moreover, from the characters' accounts, the audience learn that certain significant events, which happened off stage, took place at night as well, namely the previous two appearances of the ghost and Hamlet's discovery of the King's letter ordering his execution (in this case, we are even told that, prior to the event, the protagonist suffered from a mysterious insomnia, which prompted him to search his companions' pockets, see 5. 2. 4–6). It might be said that all nocturnal enterprise in *Hamlet* is strongly marked by the sense of ambiguity, uneasiness and the constantly questioned functioning of reason. Hamlet's remark that at night, he can "do such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on", is symptomatic of the entire organisational structure of the play: at night, things can happen that could not take place in the daytime (these being not limited to the presence of a supernatural figure, although it is the most obvious element) and truths are revealed that would otherwise remain hidden

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was a much weightier thing than simply to murder for revenge". See Jerah Johnson, "The Concept of the 'King's Two Bodies' in *Hamlet*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 18 (1967): 430–434 at 434.

[31] The fencing match at the end of the play, in which the main plot culminates, is an exception, having a unique position in the play: it does not only conclude the main strand of the dramatic narrative, but also the subplot, containing the fortunes of Polonius and his children, and the "overplot", following the course of political events at the Danish court, including the question of the royal succession. For the symbolical brightening at the end of the final scene, an unmarked setting seems to be more appropriate.

from unobservant eyes. The night in *Hamlet* thus assumes the rôle of a peculiar communication space and, at the same time, a stage on which the most pressing questions of the daytime can be explored. Nocturnal time, however, despite being a dramatic device, also retains its real-life associations. To what extent can Hamlet and his friends rely upon their senses and their mental faculties? Can they transfer the information they have learnt after dark back into the daytime world? Are they not just under the influence of dark powers, whatever these might be? In a way, the presence of the night in the narrative poses the same dilemmas as dramatic dreams, whose deployment in Shakespeare's plays we have discussed in the previous chapters.

Although *Hamlet* represents a rather complex and sophisticated treatment of the nocturnal motif in the composition of a play, a systematic dramaturgical exploration of the topos can already be observed in the works of Shakespeare's predecessors written more than a decade earlier. The most obvious parallel to *Hamlet* would, in this respect, be *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582–1592) by Thomas Kyd (1558–1594). If we put aside the additions of dubious provenance and problematic dramatic quality (first included in Q4 published in 1602),[32] the play – like *Hamlet* – contains three night-scenes.

The first one is supposed to be a veil for Horatio and Bel-imperia, who arrange a secret rendezvous in Hieronimo's bower "when Vesper gins to rise" (2. 2. 45), because "the court were dangerous, that place is safe" (l. 44). The love-scene, however, turns into a stage for an entirely different incident: Lorenzo, the son of the Duke of Castile and Bel-imperia's brother, overhears the lovers' plans, and since he wants to match his sister with Portuguese Prince Balthazar, he declares his intention to kill Horatio. At the bower, he, Balthazar and two servants in disguise abduct Bel-imperia, hang Horatio and stab him to death. Although the lovers initially hoped that "in darkness pleasures may be done" that need to remain hidden during the day (2. 4. 3), Hieronimo, upon discovering his son's corpse, laments, "O heavens, why made you night to cover sin? / By day this deed of darkness had not been" (ll. 24f). The dual nature and unpredictability of the night, which we discussed at the beginning of the present chapter, is thus again dramatically utilized: the night might serve its inhabitants, but, with an equal possibility, turn against them. For the

[32] A recent study by Brian Vickers, drawing upon the collocation analysis of the additions, confidently attributes the 320 lines not appearing in the first editions of *The Spanish Tragedy* to Shakespeare (see Brian Vickers, "Identifying Shakespeare's Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* (1602): A New(er) Approach", *Shakespeare* 8 [2012]: 13–43). I am grateful to Professor Vickers for bringing his article to my attention.

dramatist, this tension presents an ideal means of shaping the play's atmosphere and raising dramatic suspense.[33]

The elaboration and consequence of the "deed of darkness" is presented in the remaining two night-scenes of the play. Afraid that his act might be revealed, Lorenzo orders Pedringano, one of the servants present at the murder, to kill Serebrine, the other of the servants, at a park "This night" (3. 2. 82). Serebrine is indeed murdered at the appointed time, but since Lorenzo has warned the guards in order to remove Pedringano as well, the murderer is immediately arrested and, ultimately, executed. Finally, the last dramatic night occurs when Hieronimo revenges his son's death. At the banquet held to celebrate Bel-imperia's and Balthazar's wedding, Hieronimo (having meanwhile learned the identity of Horatio's murderers) arranges a tragedy to be staged, during which Balthazar and Lorenzo are stabbed to death and Bel-imperia kills herself. Instead of an epilogue, Hieronimo presents to the audience the body of his son and explains the circumstances of his death. An interesting fact about this monologue is Hieronimo's emphasis upon the night – this time, however, not as a mere scene of the crime, but an active accomplice in it (if not the main culprit):

> [*Hieronimo.*] The cause was love, whence grew this mortal hate,
> The hate, Lorenzo and young Balthazar,
> The love, my son to Bel-imperia.
> But night, the coverer of accursed crimes,
> With pitchy silence hush'd these traitors' harms
> And lent them leave[.]
> (4. 4. 98–103)

Hieronimo's words attribute to the night, as it were, a conscience, a will not only to hide mischief, but also to commit it. As in the case of *Hamlet*, the night is treated in the play as a setting or entity in opposition to the standard rules of the day (the lovers escape the law of the day, hoping that the night will provide them with a friendly shelter; the symbol of the arbour, which, as Hieronimo emphasises, "was made for pleasure", but the night turned

[33] Although it is humans who stand immediately behind the tragic death of Horatio, the presence of the allegorical figure of Revenge and the ghost of Don Andrea on the stage keeps the spectators reminded that the events they are watching might, in fact, be the result of a supernatural action. The touch of the Unseen is also stressed by the brief exchange between the lovers at the beginning of the scene, when Bel-imperia confides that "[her] heart foretells [her] some mischance". Upon these words, Horatio remarks that "fair fortune is [their] friend", adding that "The stars […] hold back their twinkling shine, / And Luna hides herself to pleasure [them]" (2. 2. 14–19). Bel-imperia, therefore, decides to give no credit to her misgivings (in the same manner as recipients of dream warnings do) and expresses her resolution to "conquer [her] misdoubt" (l. 20). This very soon proves to have been a grave mistake, as the audience might anticipate. A similar situation, with the same possible connotations, can be found in *Hamlet*, when the Prince, before the fencing match, tells Horatio: "But thou wouldst not think how all here about my heart – but it is no matter". Although Horatio shows his concern by replying, "Nay, good my lord –", Hamlet mocks his own misgivings: "It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman" (5. 2. 149–54). Cf. the discussion of rejected dream prophecies in Chapter 3 of the present thesis.

it into “a place […] for death”, 2. 5. 12). In *The Spanish Tragedy*, however, a further step is made and, by stressing the active participation of darkness in the bloody events, “Night” enters the dramaturgical plan of the play almost as an independent character (just like Revenge), with its own intentions, desires and schemes.[34]

Unlike in Kyd’s play, the beginning of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592) disperses all doubts as to whether the night will be presented from any other than the darkest perspective imaginable. At the end of the first scene, after the conference with Cornelius and Valdes, Faustus expresses his determination to test his magical abilities for the first time on the following night: “For ere I sleepe Ile trie what I can do, / This night Ile conjure thou I die therefore” (sc. 1, ll. 165f). Faustus’s words suggest that the fictitious nights in the play will be the setting for devilish temptation and death. During the audience’s next encounter with Faustus in his study, the eponymous protagonist of the story starts his famous conjuring speech by setting the appropriate background for the event. Apart from establishing the atmosphere of the situation, the speech also informs the audience how much dramatic time has passed since the previous scene:

> *Faustus.* Now that the gloomy shadow of the earth,[35]
> Longing to view *Orions* drisling looke,
> Leapes from the’antartike world unto the skie,
> And dimmes the welkin with her pitchy breath:
> *Faustus*, begin thine incarnations[.]
> (sc. 3, ll. 1–5; original italics)[36]

Upon conjuring Mephastophilis, Faust orders the devil to go to his master Lucifer to ask for his services in exchange for Faustus’s soul. Before Mephastophilis departs, Faust

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[34] In Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*, the Night appears as a character in a masque celebrating Amintor’s and Evande’s nuptials (1. 2. 118–283). Her rôle in the piece is, however, rather symbolical and the main burden of “action” lies on Cynthia, who summons Neptune and orders him to have the mild winds released to play music, and to bring his sea gods to sing. Night is then asked to “*Stay, stay and hide / The blushes of the bride*” and with her “*darkness cover / The kisses of her lover*” (1. 2. 233f, 235f; original italics). It is precisely this image of the night, a helper of lovers, that Horatio and Bel-imperia hoped to find in Hieronimo’s bower.

[35] All early-modern editions of *Doctor Faustus* printed from 1616 onwards emend the word “earth” for “night”.

[36] Faustus’s invocation of the night must have been popular among early-modern English audiences. A paraphrase of it can be found in the first scene of *The Taming of a Shrew*. When the nobleman of the induction and his entourage first enter, the lord remarks: “Now that the gloomy shadow of the night, / Longing to view Orion’s drizzling looks, / Leaps fro th’antartic world unto the sky, / And dims the welkin with her pitchy breath, / And darksome night o’ershades the crystal heavens, / Here break we off our hunting for tonight” (sc. 1, ll.8–13). When, early in the morning, the tapster enters the scene to conclude the framing plot of the play, he observes: “Now that the darksome night is overpast, / And dawning day appears in crystal sky, / Now I must haste abroad” (sc. 15, ll. 1–3). In this case, however, the motif of the night does not presage a dark story: instead of devils, all the lord “conjures” is a sleeping drunkard. The two references to the time of the day give boundaries to the topsy-turvydom of the inner story: something as unbelievable as Sly’s experience could only happen at night. No wonder that Sly wakes up convinced that it was just a dream.

instructs him to "meete [him] in [his] study at midnight" (sc. 3, l. 99). Koslofsky points out that the midnight scene of Faustus forfeiting his soul to the dark powers is Marlowe's original contribution to the Faust myth, since his source text, the 1587 *Historia von Johann Fausten* (published in English before 1592 as *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserued Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*), places the actual sealing of the pact "in the morning betimes".[37] The night, Koslofsky maintains, provides a more powerful scene to Faustus's seduction, since at this time, Mephastophilis has, so to speak, "the full array of temptations and illusions at his disposal".[38] That is certainly a correct observation and we might find support for this reading in Nashe's pamphlet, which states that "[l]ike a cunning fowler, to this end he [*i.e.*, the devil] spreadeth his nets of temptation in the darke, that men might not see to auoyd them", finishing with the rhetorical question, "When hath the diuell commonly first appeared vnto anie man but in the night?"[39] Given this dark cultural status of the night, we might, indeed, expect that a nocturnal background for man's seduction by the devil must have had a greater impact upon Elizabethan theatregoers. There is, however, also a more mundane explanation to the question why Marlowe digressed from his source in this point.

In the original *Faustbuch*, Faustus's end takes place, stylishly, "between twelve and one a clocke at midnight". Furthermore, the reader is informed that before the final visitation of devils at Faustus's house, "there blewe a mighty storme of winde against the house, as though it would have blowne the foundation thereof out of his place" (cf. the nocturnal signs before Caesar's murder).[40] Then the students, sleeping in the adjacent room to Faustus's, heard hissing "as if the hall had beene full of Snakes and Adders" and Faustus's crying for help.[41] On the following morning, the students discovered Faust's body torn into pieces. Marlowe's version repeats this account of the event, including the specific time (the stroke of midnight). When, in the morning, two scholars want to visit Faustus's room, they talk about the "dreadfull night", which "was never seene, / Since first the worlds creation did begin" (B-text, sc. 13a, ll. 2f). Subsequently, they enter the room and find Faustus's mutilated corpse. If we consider that Faust was given exactly "foure and twentie yeares" of life upon making the pact with the devil (sc. 5, l. 110), it is, for the sake of consistency, more logical indeed to stage the signing of the infernal contract at the same hour as Faustus's death.

[37] *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserued Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*, trans. P. F. (London: Thomas Orwin, 1592) 6.

[38] Koslofsky 27.

[39] Nashe 346–47.

[40] *The Historie of the Damnable Life* 81.

[41] Ibid.

Moreover, the contrast between two nocturnal scenes at the beginning and the end of the Faust story offers an ingenious dramatic illustration of the central theme of the play, that is, the seduction and fall of man. At the beginning of the play, we meet Faustus intoxicated with megalomaniac thoughts and belief in his own omnipotence:

> [*Faustus.*] Ile levy souldiers with the coyne they [*i.e.*, the dark spirits] bring,
> And chase the Prince of *Parma* from our land,
> And raigne sole king of all our provinces:
> Yea stranger engines for the brunt of warre,
> Then was the fiery keele at *Antwarpes* bridge,
> Ile make my servile spirits invent[.]
> (sc. 1, ll. 92–97; original italics)

Convinced that "When *Mephastophilus* shal stand by me, / What God can hurt thee *Faustus?* thou art safe" (sc. 5, ll. 24f; original italics) and believing that the powers of darkness are at his service, Faustus cannot wait for the night to come and invites the nocturnal forces to haste: "Ist not midnight? come *Mephastophilus*, / *Veni veni Mephastophile*" (ll. 28f; original italics – cf. Hamlet's "Would the night were come"). To his mind, the night is there for him to fulfil his innermost desires, whereas the prospect of infernal punishment is, in his words, just "a fable" (l. 130) and "meere olde wives tales" (l. 138).

In the final scene, however, we see a different Faust. He has now reached the conclusion that he committed "a deadly sinne that hath damnd both body and soule" (sc. 16, ll. 11f) and "must remaine in hel for ever" (l. 25). He has realised that the infernal services which he received were merely "vaine pleasure" (l. 40) and that by wanting them he has "lost eternall joy and felicitie" (l. 41). That is a sharp shift from the pride of the previous nocturnal scene. Faustus's confidence is replaced by desperation, as he tries to arrest the time and prevent midnight from coming:

> [*Faustus.*] Stand still you ever moving spheres of heaven,
> That time may cease, and midnight never come:
> Faire Natures eie, rise, rise againe, and make
> Perpetuall day, or let this houre be but a yeere,
> A moneth, a weeke, a naturall day[.]
> (sc. 13, ll. 64–68)

The formerly most welcomed guest has morphed into a deadly enemy and while the previous time Faust allowed the world of darkness to convince him that he was in control of its conduct, the night now refuses to obey his orders. The uncompromising striking of the clock in the background of Faustus's final appeals to God's mercy remains a symbolical testimony to the illusionary character of the power which the magician was enjoying and the tragic folly of any attempt to subjugate cosmic powers to man's authority.

The text of Thomas Nashe's tracts ends with a similar warning, maintaining that "hee whom in the day heauen cannot exhale, the night wil neuer helpe: she onely pleading for her old grandmother hell".[42]

## 4. 2 Day and Night in *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

We have observed that in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the night can fulfil a number of technical functions: it sets the mood of the scene, creates a stage for dramatic situations of a certain kind and, on some occasions, even plays, as it were, an active part in the development of the plot. The night-time can thus be as much a temporal as a spatial category, sometimes being treated almost as an item on the list of the *dramatis personae*, which influences the affairs on the stage "from behind". In the following section, we will focus on the dramatic rôles of night in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – plays commonly considered as (respectively) tragic and comic variations upon the same story,[43] which both employ the trope of the night as a privileged structural device.

The narrative of *Romeo and Juliet* is presented as a sequence of several – more or less consecutive – days and nights, which keeps the play's settings alternating between two very different worlds. The mood of the diurnal portion of the play is presented in the very first scene of the play, containing the fight which takes place first between servants of the houses of Capulet and Montague, then continues between the prominent members of the houses, and finally culminates between old Capulet and Montague themselves. The riot is only interrupted by the Prince of Verona, who threatens death for anyone who would break the peace again. The audience never learn anything specific about the origin of the rivalry between the families. The Prince's vague mention that "Three civil brawls bred of an airy word" (1. 1. 82) suggests that behind the feud lies some petty reason and old Capulet's admission that "'tis not hard, I think, / For men so old as we [*i.e.*, both Capulet and Montague] to keep the peace" (1. 2. 2f) indicates that even the heads of the enemy houses do not see much sense in the exhaustive strife. *Romeo and Juliet* thus opens to the world of uncompromising law and violence, which, despite having no apparent meaningful basis, hang over the destiny of all characters in the play.

From the subsequent conversation between Benvolio, old Montague and Lady Montague, it becomes clear that Romeo not only is not, but even refuses to be part of this

[42] Nashe 386.
[43] See, for instance, Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 213.

world. He did not take part in the street fight, but was instead seen walking alone "an hour before the worshipped sun / Peered forth the golden window of the east" (1. 1. 112). Old Montague testifies that his son indeed prefers the nocturnal world and, as soon as "the all-cheering sun / Should in the farthest east begin to draw / The shady curtains from Aurora's bed" (ll. 127–29), he shuts himself in his room "And makes himself an artificial night" (l. 133). For Romeo, however, the night is not primarily a part of day, as Benvolio and Montague's testimonies might seem to indicate, but rather a state of mind. As Marjorie Garber notes, in the early phases of the play, Romeo presents himself as "a deliberate onstage caricature of the sonnet-writing, lovesick, moon-struck lover",[44] whose wretched state and words of love are a conglomerate of various kinds of clichés from lyrical poetry of the time. Consistently with this observation, when he and his companions are joining the ball at Capulet's house, Romeo offers to be a light-bearer of the group, since he himself is "but heavy" (1. 4. 12), that is, weighed down by a dark mood.[45] Furthermore, his definition of love, which he gives to Benvolio, as "anything of nothing first create [*i.e.*, created]" (1. 1. 170) almost prefigures Mercutio's description of dreams as entities "as thin of substance as the air". Romeo thus implicitly questions the veracity of his feelings (which, just like dreams, may or may not be true), but also (more importantly) confines love, the main preoccupation of his mind, to the world of darkness, the time and place where dreamers "do dream things true" (1. 4. 52). To Romeo's mind, the night offers him a milieu more suitable for his melancholic nature and an appropriate space for examining (or, in his own words, "dreaming") issues, which are not contaminated with daytime worries. His surprising reply to Benvolio's morning greetings, "Is the day so young?" (1. 1. 153), expresses Romeo's desire to skip this tedious part of the day and immerse himself again in nocturnal contemplations.

For a moment, it seems that this private night will disappear with Romeo's first encounter with Juliet and the play will be dominated solely by day. From the instant he sets eyes on Capulet's daughter, Romeo associates Juliet with light in darkness, calling her "a snowy dove trooping with crows" (1. 5. 45) and maintaining that she "doth teach the torches to burn bright" (l. 41). In his eyes, she "hangs upon the cheek of night / As a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear" (ll. 42f; cf. "Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night / Makes black night beauteous and her old face new" from Shakespeare's Sonnet 27), and, when he

[44] Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 191–92.

[45] According to *OED*, the word "heavy" could, in Shakespeare's time, mean "'weighed down' with sorrow or grief" (see "heavy, adj.", *The Oxford English Dictionary*). Here, of course, Shakespeare plays with the opposites "light" and "heavy" in both of their obvious meanings (radiant/of little weight vs. dark/of great weight). Cf. Romeo's earlier remark that love is "heavy lightness" (1. 4. 171).

sees her again in the famous balcony scene, he compares her appearance to a sunrise which will kill the moon (2. 1. 45f).[46] Romeo's ostentatious melancholy suddenly fades and the parody of a Petrarchan lover from most of the first act of the play is replaced by a resolute man who desires to reconcile nocturnal and diurnal sides of both his inner and outer worlds.

It soon, nevertheless, becomes clear that the night – this time in a more literal sense – will continue to mark Romeo and Juliet's fates. At the same moment that Romeo remains petrified by Juliet's beauty, his presence is spotted by Tybalt, who immediately wants to punish Romeo's alleged impertinence "To scorn at our [*i.e.*, the Capulets'] solemnity this night" (1. 5. 60). Old Capulet, however, insists that his nephew compose himself, leave Romeo alone and "put off […] / An ill-beseeming semblance for a feast" (ll. 70f), since he would have to face embarrassment if any harm were done to Montague's son in his house. It is thus, paradoxically, the walls of Capulet's mansion and the boundaries of the night that ensure Romeo's safety and create an opportunity for him to meet his wife-to-be. Juliet rightly acknowledges that, in the daytime, an encounter of the two would indeed not be possible, claiming that her love was by "the dark night […] so discoverèd" (2. 1. 148). When the two lovers, hidden under the "night's cloak" (l. 117), have assured each other of their feelings and the sun has almost started to rise, Juliet (unwillingly) urges Romeo to leave. She knows that bringing their relationship into the light of day would be too dangerous.

The misgivings about the incompatibility of Juliet's love with the daily world are soon substantiated. Already before Romeo and Juliet's secret wedding on the following day, the audience learn that, early in the morning, Tybalt sent Romeo a challenge to a duel. The dreamy, magical atmosphere of the previous night is replaced by a much more sinister tone, introduced at the beginning of the play. The audience are again reminded of the violent nature of daytime Verona. When, at the beginning of Act 3, his attempts at responding to Tybalt's rage with conciliatory words end with the death of his closest friend, Romeo realises that the mood of the night cannot be simply transplanted into the daytime world and any trying to do so will result in a tragedy. "O sweet Juliet," he laments, "Thy beauty hath made me effeminate, / And in my temper softened valour's steel" (3. 1. 108–10). Romeo admits that his nocturnal affections are unsuitable for the proceedings of

[46] The balcony – or, strictly speaking, window – scene is alluded to in scene 2. 6 of *The Merchant of Venice*. Lorenzo, wearing a mask, is standing below a window of Shylock's house, in which there is Jessica. Just like Juliet, Jessica, too, says that "[She is] glad 'tis night" (l. 34). Her reason, however, is more pragmatic than that of Juliet: disguised as a boy, Jessica is on the point of eloping with her secret lover and steal her father's money and jewellery. Although, in scene 5. 1, Jessica and Lorenzo place their nocturnal adventure next to amorous couples of classical mythology, in their case, the night, in fact, covers a crime.

the day and the subsequent slaughter of Tybalt and the Prince's verdict over Romeo only corroborate what has, by that point, become obvious – that the night will remain the exclusive stage for the young couple's love.

As the daily situation for the lovers becomes more desperate, the night obtains ever clearer contours and greater dramatic emphasis. In the early moments of the play, Romeo's night is just "artificial", no more than a grotesque posture; upon the encounter of Romeo and Juliet, it morphs into a "blessèd, blessed night", which gives rise to things "Too flattering-sweet to be substantial" (2. 1. 181–83); and, finally, after the climactic duel between Romeo and Tybalt, which irrevocably defines the genre of the play as tragedy, the night becomes an elaborated locus, which not only provides its inhabitants with a safe shelter, but also serve as something to which the characters can ascribe human attributes and develop an emotional attachment:

> *Juliet.* Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
> Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a waggoner
> As Phaëthon would whip you to the west
> And bring in cloudy night immediately.[47]
> Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
> That runaway's eyes may wink, and Romeo
> Leap to these arms untalked of and unseen.
> Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
> By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
> It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
> Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
> And learn me how to lose a winning match
> Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
> Hood my unmanned blood, bating in my cheeks,
> With thy black mantle till strange love grown bold
> Think true love acted simple modesty.
> Come, night, come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
> For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
> Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
> Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-browed night,
> Give me my Romeo, and when I shall die
> Take him and cut him out in little stars,
> And he will make the face of heaven so fine
> That all the world will be in love with night
> And pay no worship to the garish sun.
> (3. 2. 1–25)

While old Montague, in speaking at the beginning of the play of the sun drawing curtains from Aurora's bed, uses classical imagery and rhetorical personification of the day as a mere commonplace, Juliet's soliloquy goes further: it employs Graeco-Roman mythology to turn nocturnal and diurnal worlds into imaginative characters. The lavish sun becomes

[47] Cf. Ovid's "lente currite, Noctis equi!" (Ovid, *Amores*, ed. Geyza Némethy [Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Letters, 1907] 1. 8. 40). The entire thirteenth elegy of the first book of Ovid's *Amores* (sometimes entitled "A Complain to the Morning Star"), in its addressing the personified morning and asking it not to haste and the night to stay longer, resembles Juliet's speech and the subsequent converstation between Romeo and Juliet before Romeo's departure (Act 3, Scene 5).

Juliet's unwanted adversary, who needs to be repelled so as to give way to the "civil night", the "sober-suited matron all in black", which becomes an object of Juliet's worship instead. Just as Romeo saw in Juliet light in darkness – a sun with the power to kill the moon – Juliet considers Romeo as the "day in night", making ordinary days unwelcome and unnecessary. To her mind, "Lovers can see […] by their own beauties", with the night being an ideal setting in which these beauties can fully shine.

Although, at this point, Juliet is not yet aware of Romeo's deed, which has killed any hopes that their love will transcend the dark hours, her words firmly associate her husband with night-time ("Come, night, come, Romeo", cf. Hamlet's and Faustus's uncanny invocations of the night), as if she never wanted their relationship to enjoy both parts of the day. The desire to confine her love under the veil of darkness becomes prominent towards the end of her speech, when Juliet (without realising it) predicts her own death and expresses a wish that the night transform her husband into an astral image that would forever outshine the sun. Similarly to real dreams, Juliet's dreamy words will be fulfilled with a tragic irony in the last fictitious night of the play: upon seeing the dead couple, old Montague and Capulet commission two gold statues of the dead lovers to be cast, effectively creating two shiny monuments at a time when "sun for sorrow will not show his head" (5. 3. 305).[48] As in other places in the play, the character's words thus prove to be wiser, darker and more ominous than the speaker could possibly know.

We might say that the night, which originally gives birth to the love of Romeo and Juliet and promises to create a private, intimate world for their affection, ultimately turns into the couple's tomb, in which their love – just like they themselves – ends up buried.

In spite of several surface similarities, the dramatic image of the night in Shakespeare's slightly later comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,[49] is radically different. Just like Shakespeare's earlier tragedy, the *Dream* opens to the diurnal world of sterile reason, violence, and stern law. From the very first scene, the audience learn that love and passions

[48] It is interesting to note that while the Q2 (1599), Q3 (1609) and F1 (1623) versions of the speech read "when I [*i.e.*, Juliet] shall die" on the equivalent to line 3. 2. 21 of modern editions, the Q4 (1622) and Q5 (1637) variants read "when he [*i.e.*, Romeo] shall die". Considering the actual ending of the play, this little inconsistency, too, is a touch worthy of Shakespearian dramatic irony. The variant readings might also suggest that both versions might have appeared on early-modern stage at some point.

[49] The question of the chronology of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has not been unanimously agreed upon. The first single-volume Oxford edition of Shakespeare's works (1988), for instance, places *Dream* before *Romeo*, dating both plays between 1594 and 1595, while the second edition (2005) reverses this order, keeping the original estimate. The present author draws from the traditional chronology of Shakespeare's plays, as suggested by E. K. Chambers – who places *Romeo* between 1594 and 1595, and *Dream* between 1595 and 1596 (see Chambers 270) – and later supported by Peter Holland and others (see Peter Holland, Introduction, 110–12).

are not a matter of a person's free will, but are rather subject to duty and obedience. The royal couple of the day-world, Theseus and Hippolyta, whose wedding preparations the spectators watch, were not united by their mutual affections, but by military conquest. Similarly, Egeus insists on his daughter, Hermia, marrying a man against her will, not hesitating to invoke "the ancient privilege of Athens" (1. 1. 41), according to which filial disobedience is punished by death.

At this point, however, the audience are also informed about the existence of an alternative world to this strict daily order: whereas, during the day, Hermia is told to "Be advised" (l. 46), "question [her] desires" (l. 67) and "examine well [her] blood" (l. 68) – in other words, to suppress her passions and succumb to the rule of reason – the night is presented as a period when Hermia can give free ride to her feelings and transgress the Athenian law. Egeus emphasises that it was at night that Lysander, Hermia's true love, "bewitched the bosom of [his, *i.e.*, Egeus's] child" (l. 27) and "by moonlight at her window sung / […] And stol'n the impression of her fantasy" (ll. 30, 31). Love is thus, again, defined as a state close to the state of dreaming (imagination, or fantasy, as we explained in Chapter 2. 1, was a faculty of the soul responsible for dreams), which can only flourish under the cloak of night, while the diurnal "cold reason", to which Duke Theseus refers later on in the play (5. 1. 6), acts according to the scheme of censoring or suppressing love's exercise.

The idea that the nocturnal events of *Romeo and Juliet* do resemble a dream is briefly mentioned by Romeo himself, who, having just obtained a promise of Juliet's love, fears for a moment that, "Being in night, all this is but a dream" (2. 1. 182). Although Drábek suggests that "[t]hroughout the play the love is taken as a dreamlike fantasy rather than anything real",[50] no part of *Romeo and Juliet* is, despite the play's dreamy atmosphere, strictly speaking presented as an objective dream experience. In the *Dream*, however, the motif of the night being a gateway to the dreamy world plays a much more dominant rôle, making the play almost a masque-like allegory of the human mind and paving the way for the "life as dream" metaphor of Shakespeare's later works.

The first peek into the shady nocturnal world is offered to the spectators at the beginning of Act 2. Lysander and Hermia, followed by Hermia's other suitor, Demetrius, and Helena (who is in love with Demetrius), decide to escape the jurisdiction of the law and elope at night to meet each other in the woods beyond the city (cf. Horatio and Bel-imperia's meeting at Hieronimo's bower at night). Oblivious to the presence of invisible supernatural beings inhabiting the forest, the humans cease to have control over their

[50] Drábek, "'My Dream Presage Too True'".

minds upon entering the uncanny realm and fall into the sphere of power of the woodland spirits.

The organisation of the play's *sujet* is indicative. Whereas in *Romeo and Juliet*, night and day scenes alternate in order to create an illusion of the passage of time, necessary for the advancement of the plot, in the *Dream*, the daytime portion of the plot roughly corresponds to the first and fifth acts, with the nocturnal part occupying the three acts in the middle. Moreover, unlike in the previously discussed plays, the presence of night in the *Dream* does not produce much actual development of the plot: the induction (Act 1) announces the preparation for the royal wedding, introduces the two young couples and explains their complicated relationships, and informs the audience about the plan of local mechanicals to stage a play in honour of the Duke and his future wife. For the next three acts, however, the world of Athens is altogether banished from the stage and the spectators watch some of its protagonists transported into a fairy-tale-like landscape, whose nature is, on the one hand, completely foreign to the protagonists' everyday experience, but, on the other hand, presented as something entirely ordinary and self-evident. On the following morning, the characters wake up to the same world which they left at the end of the previous day, the only part of the night brought to the light of day being Demetrius's regained affections for Helena. The dramatic epilogue (Act Five) finishes the business started in the induction, with no direct interaction between the nocturnal and diurnal worlds: the Duke marries Hippolyta, the conflict between Demetrius and Lysander is, due to Demetrius' transformation, finally settled, and the artisans stage their play.

Both the division of the plot elements between a kind of a frame and a contained story, and the allegorical settings of the middle portion of the play resonate with the techniques of mediaeval dream literature. As we have demonstrated in Chapter 2. 6, Shakespeare experimented with this old form in early stages of his dramatic career and we might assume that, with the wave of Elizabethan dream plays in the early 1590s, certain conventions of the dream-vision were popular among the reading and theatregoing audiences of the time. In the context of the popularity of the dream as a literary genre among Elizabethans in this period, it is not without interest that the famous Italian romance *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), attributed to Francesco Colonna (1433–1527), which draws upon the tradition of the dream-vision and which, like Shakespeare's *Dream*, partly takes place in a forest replete with magical creatures, was published in Robert Dallington's partial English translation in 1592 – around the same time that the wave of Elizabethan

dream plays of the 1590s appeared and just a couple of years before the *Dream* was probably first performed.

What, however, affiliates the middle part of the play most with a dream experience, is the emphasis on unrestricted passions, for which the enchanted forest provides an ideal environment and which are in sharp contrast with the rules of the Athenian court. Whereas, in scene 1. 1, Theseus castigates Hermia for following her heart and insists that "[her] eyes must with [Egeus's] judgement look" (l. 57), Oberon (a counterpart to, and, as it were, a nocturnal form of the Duke),[51] having observed how Helena was rejected by her beloved Demetrius, has another use for human sight: he instructs Puck to seek the Athenian couple, anoint Demetrius's eyes with magical juice and ensure that "the next thing he espies / May be the lady" (2. 1. 262f). We explained, in the introduction to Chapter 2 of the present study, that, according to humanistic tenets, the faculty of reason was able to perform only in daytime, when the person was fully awake. On the other hand, at night, when the senses were dulled and the person was sleeping or in a transitional state between being asleep and awake, reason could no longer censor daily passions and sensations, carried by the spirits of life, and the faculty of fantasy took control over the mind. Oberon's acting in the name of love and imagination, as opposed to Theseus's will to suppress the passions in the name of reason, therefore gives the woods a clearly recognisable aura of the chaotic world of dreams, which, despite retaining exterior signs of the daytime-world, professes entirely different values and functions under rules of its own.

If we accept the reading of the lovers' (and the mechanicals' in the second plot) nocturnal experience as an allegory of dream, we might find other analogies between the action of the play and humanistic oneiric lore. Queen Mab, who, according to Mercutio's account, shapes dreams by touching delicate parts of sleepers' bodies, is in the *Dream* present in form of an entire family of unearthly entities, who, with the help of a magical herb, can alter human minds by touching the sleepers' eyelids. Just like the rule of the spirits of life, however, the power of the woodland spirits is limited to a sleeping person only: Oberon explicitly tells the Puck that the juice of the herb must be rubbed on "sleeping eyelids" (2. 1. 170) and that he has to wait with the application of the mind-altering fluid "Till o'er their [*i.e.*, Lysander's and Demetrius's] brows death-counterfeiting sleep / With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep" (3. 2. 364f). Although there is one

[51] Although no list of the distribution of the rôles from Shakespeare's times survives, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the parts of Theseus and Hippolyta and Oberon and Titania were doubled, as they commonly are in modern productions (see Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 215; a noteworthy example from recent years might be the 2009 production of the play by the British Shakespeare Company, directed by Robert J. Williamson).

case of the spirits affecting a waking person, turning Bottom's head into that of an ass, this episode, too, bears a strong resemblance to early modern dream tenets. In his *Moste Pleasuante Arte*, Thomas Hill writes: "But hee that thinketh in his dreame, to haue a heade like to a dog, horse, asse, or any other four footed beast, doth protende seruitude, bondage, and care of mynde wythe heauines[.]"[52]

It is not so surprising that, in the dream-world of the play, the remaining two metamorphoses mentioned by Hill – together with a number of others – take place as well. When the Puck teases the mechanicals, he says that he will chase them across the forest in various forms:

> [*Robin*] Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
> A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire,
> And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,
> Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.
> (3. 1. 96–99)

Despite this extraordinary power to change minds and shapes, it is repeatedly stressed that the outer limit for its exercise is the morning twilight – in other words, the moment before men wake up and the rule of the day is restored. Towards the end of the night, Puck warns Oberon that if they want to reunite the couples and settle all the confusion they have caused, they must hurry, because the sun is on the point of rising and all "damnèd spirits […] Already to their wormy beds are gone" (3. 2. 382, 384). Oberon, on the one hand, remarks that they are "spirits of another sort" (l. 388), but at the same time urges Puck to "haste, make no delay; / We may effect this business yet ere day" (ll. 394f).

As we have mentioned on several occasions, one of the distinctive features of sleeping and dreaming was the suspension of the faculty of reason, with imagination replacing its functions. However, since the sleeping mind was unaware of the change and could not distinguish between reality and a false image created by its fantasy, the dreamer tended to think that his sensations were genuine and that his reason was still performing. Of this phenomenon, Thomas Hobbes, in the discussion of dreams in the first part of *Leviathan* (1651), says:

> [A] Dreame must needs be more cleare, in this silence of sense, than are our waking thoughts. And hence it cometh to passe, that it is a hard matter, and by many thought impossible to distinguish exactly between Sense and Dreaming. […] And because waking I often observe the absurdity of Dreames, but never dream of the absurdities of my waking Thoughts; I am well satisfied, that being awake, I know I dreame not; though when I dreame, I think my selfe awake.[53]

[52] Hill, *A Moste Pleasaunte Arte*, sig. K8v (contraction expanded).

[53] Hobbes II, 17–18 = 1. 2. The question of how to distinguish between the waking and dreaming states was an issue frequently raised in early-modern philosophical discourse. Stuart Clark calls the existence of the two almost indistinguishable realities the "epistemological paradox" (see Clark, "Dreams: The Epistemology

Oberon seems to be aware of this thin border between things real and unreal and believes that when the humans awake, "all this derision / Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (3. 2. 371f). Indeed, as long as human characters are under the influence of spirits, they seem to be, as it were, in a permanent dream state, mistaking fiction for truth and imagination for reason. The already mentioned French philosopher Pierre Charron, in his *Of Wisdom Three Books* (1601, the English translation 1608), warned against the deceptive power of the imaginative faculty of the soul, arguing that "[t]he imagination is a thing very strong and powerfull, [...] it makes a man to lose his vnderstanding, his knowledge, iudgement; it turnes him foole and mad-man[.]"[54] This is perfectly true of Lysander, Hermia's fiancé, who, enchanted by the magical herb, sees Helena and immediately falls in love with her, claiming that he is behaving according to his reason, although it was the sphere of reason from which he and Hermia, at the beginning of the play, desperately sought release. The previous action of the spirits and his own words (uttered in the marked form of rhymed couplets) prove that his senses are only governed by his imagination:

> [*Lysander.*] Not Hermia, but Helena I love:
> Who will not change a raven for a dove?
> The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
> And reason says you are the worthier maid.
> Things growing are not ripe until their season:
> So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
> And, touching now the point of human skill,
> Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
> And leads me to your eyes […].
> (2. 2. 119–27)

The true restoration of reason comes as late as next morning, when the spirits symbolically depart from the forest just before the two couples are awoken by the hunting-horns of Duke Theseus and his entourage.[55] The power of the nocturnal creatures over human minds has come to an end. The sleepers feel "[h]alf sleep, half waking" (4. 1. 144) and recall their nocturnal experience only in fragments and with uncertainty, using the traditional dream

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of Sleep"). The eponymous character of *Arden of Faversham* briefly faces the same problem when he has a dream-within-a-dream about being a prey of herdsmen (sc. 6, ll.–31). When Arden confides his horrible experience to his friend Franklin, he admits that "when [he] did awake, / [He] stood in doubt whether [he] waked or no, / Such great impression took this surprise" (ll. 28–30).

[54] Charron 66–67.

[55] The narrator's awakening by a sensory disturbance within the dream was a regular motif of mediaeval dream-poems (see Spearing 42; and Phillips 422). In *Dream*, however, the disturbance comes from reality outside of what we have classified as a dream episode. This alteration of the literary convention might be of no significance for the interpretation of the story, but it can also question the status of the diurnal world. After all, it is never made clear whether Demetrius has been awoken to reason or whether he remains, so to speak, in a permanent dream. Moreover, the spirits appear again at the end of the play, in the royal palace, with Puck, in his famous epilogue, inviting the audience to consider the entire play as "No more yielding but a dream" (Epilogue, 6).

formula “methinks”. Similarly, Bottom the Weaver, finally deprived of the ass’s head, sees the previous events as “a most rare vision” rather than truth (ll. 199f). The crucial difference between the lovers of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the eponymous couple of *Romeo and Juliet* is the former’s ability to reconcile the nocturnal and diurnal worlds and to transport their dream-like experience from the night to their daytime lives. Lysander’s account manages to persuade Theseus to supersede the law and Egeus’ will and allow the two couples’ dream – unlike that of Romeo and Juliet – to be fulfilled. It could be, therefore, argued that this contrast in attitudes of the diurnal world to the nocturnal one plays the dominant rôle in shaping the mood of the two works and, ultimately, becomes the major reason for their respective tragic, or comic, outcomes.

### 4. 3 Death, the Brother of Sleep

In the present study, we have, on several occasions, addressed the employment of the night in Shakespeare’s works as a special dramatic occasion for death. Sleeping characters are often placed in danger of death, which raises dramatic suspense and provokes an emotional response on the part of the audience. Dream prophecies frequently warn the sleeper against a grave peril, although they usually remain misunderstood, underestimated or altogether spurned. The night itself is, in many cases, presented as a natural setting for transgression, including murder. In the section to follow, we shall focus on another dark aspect of the nocturnal world, popular in Shakespeare’s times, which completes our image of night phenomena – namely the concept of sleep as an image of death.

The affiliation of sleep and death had been acknowledged in the Western cultural environment long before the Elizabethan era, as early as the classical period. As we have mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, according to Greek and Roman tradition, Hypnos (Ὕπνος, Somnus in Latin), god of sleep and Sleep itself, was the brother of Thanatos (Θάνατος, Mors), god of death and Death itself. Both of them were sons of Nyx (Νύξ, Nox), goddess of night and Night itself, daughter of the original Chaos (χάος). In visual art, Sleep and Death were often depicted together as young twin men with eagle wings, Hypnos holding a poppy-head, Thanatos holding an inverted torch. Hesiod’s *Theogony* describes the brother deities as follows:

> There [*i.e.*, in Tartarus] the sons of gloomy Night [Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἐρεμνῆς] have their dwelling, Sleep and Death, fearsome gods [δεινοὶ θεοί]. Never does the shining Sun look upon them with his rays when he goes up to heaven, nor when he climbs down from heaven. The one of them ranges the

> earth and the broad back of the sea gentle and mild towards men [ἥσυχος ἀνστρέφεται καὶ μείλιχος ἀνθρώποισι], but the other has a heart of iron [σιδηρέη μὲν κραδίη] and a pitiless spirit of bronze in his breast [χάλκεον δέ οἱ ἦτορ νηλεὲς ἐν στήθεσσιν]. That man is his whom he once catches, and he is hateful even to the immortal gods.[56]

This idea of the close relationship between sleep and death existed in various forms in both Greek and Roman philosophy and religious beliefs. Orphists, for instance, believed that, in sleep, the soul separated from the body and descended into Hades, as mythical Orpheus did. Perhaps under the influence of the same ideas, Socrates's contemporary Xenophon (c. 430–354 BC) acknowledged, in his *Cyropaedia* (early fourth century BC), that

> there is nothing in the world more nearly akin to death than is sleep [ἐγγύτερον μὲν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θανάτῳ οὐδέν ἐστιν ὕπνου]; and the soul of man at just such times is revealed in its most divine aspect […]; for then, it seems, it is most untrammelled by the bonds of the flesh.[57]

The first one to use the "death as sleep" metaphor in a work of fiction was Homer. In Book XI of the *Iliad*, he calls Iphidamas's death "the sleep of bronze [χάλκεος ὕπνος]"[58] and, in Book XIV of the same work, Acamas, having just killed Promachus, exclaims, "Only think, the way your Promachus has gone to sleep [εὕδει] after my spear downed him".[59] The same comparison is repeated in Book XIII of the *Odyssey*, in which "on him [*i.e.*, Odysseus] fell sleep irresistibly, delicious unbroken sleep that looked like death [νήγρετος, ἥδιστος, θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα ἐοικώς]".[60]

Marbury B. Ogle, however, stresses that the analogy between sleep and death became a staple part of Greek and, subsequently, Roman culture as late as the Hellenistic period (*i.e.*, between the late fourth and first centuries BC), "when they [*i.e.*, Greeks] were brought into intimate contact, especially in Alexandria, with peoples of other stock, resulting in the give and take of ideas which such a contact inevitably entails", and adds that "the conception of death as a sleep was not a natural one to the Greek folk, nor […] to the Roman".[61] The Jewish tradition, on the other hand, had long been familiar with this concept and, on the basis of vast literary research, Ogle assumes that it was from this

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56 Hesiod 25 = ll. 758–66.

57 Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, trans. Walter Miller, Vol. 2 (London: William Heinemann, 1925) 435 = 8. 7. 21.

58 Homer, *The Iliad*, 186 = 11. 241.

59 Homer, *The Iliad*, 252 = 14. 482f.

60 Homer, *The Odyssey*, 155–56 = 14. 79–80.

61 Marbury B. Ogle, "The Sleep of Death", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 11 (1933): 81–117 at 87.

source that both the Graeco-Roman world and Christian Europe obtained this philosophical and literary commonplace.[62]

Examples of various uses of such a motif in Jewish Scripture are plentiful: according to the First Book of Kings, "David *slept* [Dormivit igitur David][63] with his fathers, and was buried [sepultus est] in the city of David" (1 Kgs 2: 10; italics mine); a prophecy in the Book of Daniel says that "many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth [dormiunt in terra pulveris] shall awake [evigilabunt], some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dn 12: 2; italics mine); and, for example, one of the psalms reads, "Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I *sleep the sleep of death* [obdormiam in morte]" (Ps 13: 3; italics mine). Saint Gregory draws attention to various metaphorical uses of the word "sleep" in the Bible, not forgetting to mention it as a synonym of death:

> But first we must know that, in holy Scripture, sleep, when put figuratively, is understood in three senses. For sometimes we have expressed by sleep the death of the flesh [*mors carnis*], sometimes the stupefaction of neglect [*torpor negligentiae*], and sometimes tranquillity of life [*quies uitae*], upon the earthly desires being trodden underfoot.[64]

Among Christians, this view of death enjoyed wide popularity since it correlated with the idea of resurrection, which was compared to an awakening. The original Koine Greek version of the New Testament mentions the verb κοιμάω (to sleep) in different forms twelve times: nine times as a designation of physical death and only three times to mean a literal sleep.[65]

What is important, however, is that, in the course of the centuries to follow, the parallel of sleep and death found its way into secular literature as well and, by Shakespeare's time, had become a literary convention, used both with and without its original spiritual connotations. In Sonnet 32 of *Astrophil and Stella*, Sidney calls Morpheus "the lively sonne of deadly sleepe" (l. 1); the English Jesuit Robert Southwell (c. 1561–1595), in his poem *Saint Peter's Complaint* (p. 1595), calls sleep "Death's allye" (l. 721);[66] the speaker of Sonnet 15 from Bartholomew Griffin's sequence *Fidessa* (1596) describes

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[62] For further examples of the topos in classical literature, see Ogle; and Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 40–42.

[63] The Latin passages are taken from the Nova Vulgata.

[64] Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844) 282 = 5. 31. 54.

[65] See John Hurt, "Textus Receptus Greek Text, King James Bible, With Strongs Dictionary", *The HTML Bible*, 4 Oct 2012 <http://www.htmlbible.com/sacrednamebiblecom/kjvstrongs/CONGRK283.htm#S2837>.

[66] Robert Southwell, *Saint Peter's Complaynt*, in *Collected Poems*, ed. Peter Davidson and Anne Sweeney (Manchester: Fyfield Books, 2007) 63–85.

sleep as “Brother of quiet death, when life is too too long”;[67] John Donne’s Holy Sonnet 6 is based entirely on the death-as-sleep metaphor, calling rest and sleep “but thy [*i.e.*, Death’s] pictures” (l. 5).[68] Finally, Shakespeare himself, in *Venus and Adonis*, calls death “eternal sleeping” (l. 951), and, in his Sonnet 23, the night is presented as “Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest” (l. 8).

The earliest Shakespearian play to work systematically with the topos is *Romeo and Juliet*. Death, which ends the story of the ill-fated lovers and brings final clarification to the scene of long-lasting hatred, is anticipated by the audience from the very beginning of the play: the argument of the story is already expressed in the prologue and the main plot of the play was probably well-known to Elizabethan theatregoers, either through Arthur Brooke’s *Romeus and Juliet* (1562, reprinted 1587), which was the main source for Shakespeare’s version, or through an older play on the same topic, which is mentioned by Brooke in the preface to his narrative poem, but does not survive today.[69] It is, therefore, not surprising that the frequency of allusions to death in *Romeo and Juliet* (mainly made by, or concerning, the two title characters), in both metaphorical and literal senses, is so high that it becomes the key motif of the whole drama.

The first instance of Romeo mentioning his own death comes at the end of Act 1, Scene 4, when, before entering Capulet’s house, he openly expresses his misgivings that “Some consequence yet hanging in the stars / Shall […] expire the term / Of a despisèd life, closed in my breast” (ll. 107f, 108f). Analogously, Juliet talks about herself dying in the following scene, after she meets Romeo for the first time, maintaining that “If he [*i.e.*, Romeo] be marrièd, / [Her] grave is like to be [her] wedding bed” (1. 5. 132f). Without acknowledging it at the point of making this observation (but with the audience being aware of the future advancement of the plot), Juliet is actually going to be buried in her wedding dress shortly after she and Romeo have married, which gives her remark a truly ironical dimension. In the same way, the audience might interpret Mercutio’s statement that “dreamers often lie” (1. 4. 51), made in reaction to Romeo’s mentioning his ominous dream. The most obvious sense of the line would be that “dreamers often tell lies”, which is probably what Mercutio had in mind, whereas Romeo wittily responds that dreamers lie “In bed asleep, while they do dream things true” (l. 52). As will shortly be demonstrated by examples, the verb *to lie*, however, is often used in the play as a figurative synonym for *to*

[67] Bartholomew Griffin, *Fidessa; A Collection of Sonnets* (Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1815) 23.
[68] John Donne, *John Donne’s Poetry*, ed. Donald R. Dickson (New York: Norton 2007).
[69] See Arthur Brooke, *Brooke’s ‘Romeus and Juliet’, Being the Original of Shakespeare’s ‘Romeo and Juliet’*, ed. J. J. Munro (New York: Duffield, 1908) lxvi.

*die*. Mercutio's utterance could, therefore, as well have the prescient meaning "dreamers often *die*", which will later become Romeo's case.

The crucial point of the plot, which will subsequently prove decisive for the play's tragic outcome, is Friar Lawrence's plan to save Juliet from the wedding with Paris and to reunite her with Romeo, who has been banished from Verona. The whole scheme is based upon the similarity of sleep and death: Juliet should drink an herbal extract which will induce, in Friar Lawrence's words, "The form of death" (5. 3. 245), after which she will be buried and wait in the sepulchre for Romeo, whom Friar Lawrence will meanwhile inform by a letter. When describing in detail the effects of the potion to Juliet, Friar Lawrence repeatedly mentions sleep as an image of death:

> [*Friar Lawrence.*] Take thou this vial, being then in bed,
> And this distilling liquor drink thou off,
> When presently through all thy veins shall run
> A cold and drowsy humour, for no pulse
> Shall keep his native progress, but surcease.
> No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest;
> The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
> To wanny ashes, thy eyes' windows fall
> *Like death* when he shuts up the day of life.
> Each part, deprived of supple government,
> Shall, stiff and start and cold, *appear like death*;
> And in this *borrowed likeness of shrunk death*
> Thou shalt continue two-and-forty hours,
> And then awake *as from a pleasant sleep*.
> (4. 1. 93–106; italics mine)

The Nurse, Lady Capulet and old Capulet are, indeed, all deceived by the illusion and have no doubts that Juliet is really dead (4. 5). Unfortunately, another person that is fooled by the feigned death is Balthazar, a servant to Romeo, who manages to inform his master that "Her [*i.e.*, Juliet's] body *sleeps* in Capels' monument, / And her immortal part with angels lives" (5. 1. 18f; italics mine) before Friar Lawrence's letter is able to reach its addressee. In saying this, Balthazar uses the death-as-sleep metaphor exactly in accordance with the Christian view as described by Gregory the Great: he describes sleep as "the death of the flesh", with her immortal soul still awake in heaven. Of a similar character is the response of Romeo, who decides to return to Verona in order to see Juliet for the last time and die beside his wife's corpse. Upon making this final decision, Romeo remarks, "Well, Juliet, I will *lie* with thee tonight" (5. 1. 34; italics mine).

The tragedy of the situation lies in Romeo's failure to distinguish the image of death from death itself. While, at the beginning, counterfeited death is supposed to help the pair of lovers, the result is exactly the opposite. When in the tomb, Romeo observes the sleeping Juliet very closely, in a similar manner to Othello's beholding the sleeping

Desdemona or Giacomo's secret examination of Innogen in her bedroom. Just as during their first encounter at the Capulets' house, Romeo is struck by the radiance of Juliet's beauty, calling it "a lighting before death" (5. 3. 90). He notes her rosy lips and cheeks, wondering why her body does not bear any signs of death. Finally, he tells his supposedly dead wife that he will stay with her forever, "never from this pallet of dim night / Depart[ing] again" (ll. 107f), and set up his "everlasting rest" (l. 110) next to Juliet. The irony of the omnipresent, yet unnoticed or misunderstood, signs of death, which has been pervading Romeo and Juliet's fortunes from the beginning, is voiced once again: although Romeo uses the death-as-sleep (or death-as-night)[70] metaphor twice, he is himself is unable to see through the illusion of Juliet's state and remains oblivious to the differences between sleep and death.

Apart from this most significant use of the motif in the central plot of the play, there are a number of further, more or less obvious, references to the closeness of sleep and death scattered throughout the play. These instances are not altogether casual or ornamental – they keep reminding the audience of the most basic themes of the play and help to shape its atmosphere. When Romeo, for instance, after attending the ball at the Capulets, decides to jump over the wall of Capulet's mansion to meet Juliet again, Mercutio first thinks that his friend "hath stol'n him home to bed" (2. 1. 4), only to remark ironically a moment later that "The ape is dead" (l. 16); when Benvolio identifies the slain Tybalt as Mercutio's murderer, using the words "There he *lies* that Tybalt" (3. 1. 134; italics mine), a Venetian citizen (according the F1 version; Q1 more appropriately attributes the line to a watchman) misunderstands his words and, thinking that Tybalt is just sleeping, addresses him saying, "Up, sir, go with me; / I charge thee in the Prince's name, obey" (ll. 134f); when Juliet pretends to be angry about Tybalt's death before her mother, she maintains that she would like to avenge her cousin's murder herself:

> [*Juliet*] Madam, if you could find out but a man
> To bear a poison, I would temper it
> That Romeo should, upon receipt thereof,
> Soon *sleep* in quiet.
> (3. 5. 96–99; italics mine)

Another instance of connecting sleeping (this time with obvious sexual overtones) and death occurs when Capulet says to Paris over Juliet's seemingly dead body that "the night before thy wedding day / Hath Death *lain* with thy wife" (4. 5. 62f; italics mine) – Paris himself later on calls Juliet's grave "thy bridal bed" (5. 3. 12), just as Juliet did in scene

[70] Besides Shakespeare's Sonnet 23, the metaphor of death as night can be found, for instance, in *The Valliant Welshman*, when Monmouth the usurper, before a battle against King Octavian and the Earl March, exclaims, "This bloudy fight / Shal toombe their bodies in eternal night" (1. 3. 25f).

1. 5. When Friar Lawrence tries to take the awoken Juliet away from the sepulchre, he calls the place a "nest / Of death, contagion, and *unnatural sleep*" (5. 3. 151f; italics mine); and, finally, when Montague promises to have Juliet's gold funeral statue cast, Capulet says that Romeo's statue will "by his lady's *lie*" (5. 3. 302; italics mine), which means that they are going to design the statues not in the form of idealized living figures, but as lying bodies sunk in a deep sleep – exactly the type of sepulchral art which according to Ogle appeared in Europe in the Hellenistic period together with the death-as-sleep metaphor.[71] These references systematically refer to some of the most crucial topics and elements of the play's plot and, since – as has been mentioned before – the audience know the ending of the story from its beginning, they also contribute to the dramatic anticipation, presaging the play's tragic finale. We can, therefore, observe that, in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, the trope is employed to fulfil, among other things, functions similar to some of the technical rôles of dramatic dreams, which we discussed earlier in the present study.

In a somewhat more refined and subtle form, the relationship between sleep and death is presented in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the previous section, we offered a reading of the play as an allegory of the human mind, working with such opposites as night and day, love and obedience, sleeping and waking, and imagination and reason. In addition to these, the *Dream* discusses the potentially dangerous nature of sleeping, during which the characters find themselves in danger of death. However, while the keystone of *Romeo and Juliet* is actual death, and sleep mostly serves as death's metaphor, in the *Dream*, the dominant member of the dichotomy is sleep, with death becoming sleep's other, figurative side.

Although no literal death take place in the *Dream*, in an implicit form, it pervades the plot as a force opposing life, which is in the play represented by means of the institution of marriage. Hilský observes that sexuality, consecrated by wedding, is in the comedic structure of the *Dream* a powerful opponent to death, becoming a pro-creative and regenerative force, a promise of rebirth, and a pagan version of Christian resurrection.[72] A clear reference to death as the antipole to love is the already mentioned request, made by Egeus, who, in Act 1, Scene 1, begs Duke Theseus to enforce the old law, according to which Egeus has the right to put his daughter Hermia, who is not willing to leave her love fo-r the man Egeus wishes her to marry, to death (ll. 22–45). Later on, in the same scene,

[71] See Ogle 87.

[72] Hilský 95: "Sexualita posvěcená svatbou je v komediální struktuře *Snu* mocným oponentem smrti, stává se prokreativní a regenerační silou, příslibem znovuzrození, pohanskou verzí křesťanského vzkříšení."

Lysander, Hermia's wooer, laments that "if there were a sympathy in choice [*i.e.*, in choice of love], / War, *death*, or sickness, did lay siege to it" (ll. 141f; italics mine). The couple decides to elope from Athens in order to escape the threat of death and institutionalize their love in marriage, pursued by Demetrius, who is in love with Hermia and whom Hermia's father has chosen to marry her, and Helena, who loves Demetrius and whom Demetrius once loved before falling in love with Hermia. Thinking they are safe, the characters decide to spend the night in the forest outside the city. Unbeknownst to them, however, the danger of physical death which they managed to repel is only replaced by another form of death – a spiritual one – to which they can easily succumb in sleep.

The involuntary instrument of this mode of death is the magic juice which, if rubbed on the eyes of a person in a "death-counterfeiting sleep" (3. 2. 365), makes him love the first creature which he sees after awakening. Oberon, the king of the fairies, having overheard Demetrius and Helena quarrelling, decides to use this juice to make Demetrius fall in love with Helena. The plan, however, fails: the puck Robin Goodfellow mistakes Demetrius for Lysander and lays the juice on Lysander's eyes instead. When Helena finds Lysander lying on the ground, she is not able to tell by sight whether he is dead or just sleeping:

> [*Helena.*] But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
> Dead, or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
> Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.
> (2. 2. 106–8)

Ironically, Lysander himself talks about his death before he falls asleep. When Hermia, who herself finds a spot for a rest not far from her beloved, expresses a wish that his love "ne'er alter till [his] sweet life end" (2. 2. 67), he replies that with the end of his loyalty to her, his life would end indeed (l. 69). However, when Lysander awakes and spots Helena, he immediately begins to court her, despising his fiancée, saying, "Content with Hermia? No, I do repent / The tedious minutes I with her have spent" (ll. 117f). Albeit not dead in the literal sense of the word, as Helena initially suspects, by abandoning his bride, Lysander has in fact abandoned what he himself considered as the essence of life. It might, therefore, be argued that Lysander, in his sleep, spiritually died. Hermia, too, unable to find her husband-to-be, cannot think of any other explanation than that he must be dead. Since she is unaware of the presence of the fairies, and since Demetrius is Lysander's rival, Hermia automatically suspects him of killing her lover. Moreover, with the loss of Lysander, Hermia considers her life as worthless and she herself invites death:

> [*Hermia.*] If thou hast slain Lysander is his sleep,

> Being o’er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
> And kill me too.
> […]
> It cannot be but thou hast murdered him.
> (3. 2. 47–79, 56)

What is interesting is that Hermia tells Demetrius, when he is wooing her, that he, too, looks “dead” and “grim” (3. 2. 57), as if his affection for her was so inappropriate that it has marked his physical appearance. Hermia’s words suggest that Demetrius is still waiting for his spiritual resurrection, that is, his accepting of life again through accepting marriage with Helena.

The ultimate reconciliation comes at the end of the night, when Oberon orders Robin Goodfellow to bring both couples together and music to strike their senses “more dead / Than common sleep” (4. 1. 78f; for a discussion of the restorative powers of music, see Chapter 2. 4). When finally awoken, Lysander will again love Hermia and Demetrius will stay with his former love, Helena. The new day’s morning symbolises the final triumph of the vital forces and the surcease of deadly powers – or at least powers opposing life – which endangered the human characters in their sleep. The superiority of life over death is also demonstrated by the ritual dance of the fairies at the very end of the play, during which they consecrate the lovers’ bride-beds, wishing them many healthy children (5. 2).

Besides the case of Macbeth, whose loss of sleep – symbolising the loss of a death of a good Christian – was covered in Chapter 2, two later Shakespearian plays which exploit the death-as-sleep topos more extensively are *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*.[73] Especially the former of the two plays is virtually haunted by the imagery of sleep, dreams and dark nocturnal affairs. As we have previously stated, dreams in *Hamlet* often

[73] Examples of a less pertinent employment of the affiliation of sleep and death can be found in the first induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*, when the Lord, upon spotting the sleeping Sly on the ground, remarks, “Grim death, how foul and loathsome is thine image” (l. 31); King Henry IV’s invocation to sleep in scene 3. 1 of *2 Henry IV*, when the King maintains that sleep “Seal[s] up the ship-boy’s eyes, and rock his brains / […] in the visitation of winds, / Who take the ruffian billows by the top, / Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them / With deafing clamour in the slippery clouds, / That, with the hurly, death itself awakes” (ll. 19, 21–25); scene 4. 3 of the same play, when Prince Harry, upon seeing his seemingly dead father, comments, “This sleep is sound indeed. This is a sleep / That from this golden rigol hath divorced / So many English kings” (ll. 165–67); scene 2. 2 of *Cymbeline*, when Giacomo, in need of more time with the sleeping Innogen, prays, “O sleep, thou ape of death, lie dull upon her” (l. 31); scene 5. 5 of the same play, when a jailer notes to Posthumus, who is about to be executed, that “he that sleeps feels not the toothache; but a man that were to sleep your sleep, and a hangman to help him to bed, I think he would change places with his officer” (ll. 263–65); scene 5. 3 of *The Winter’s Tale*, in which Paulina, on the point of presenting the statue of Hermione to Leontes, says, “Prepare / To see the life as lively mocked as ever / Still sleep mocked death” (ll. 18–20); and scene 2. 1 of *The Tempest*, when Antonio, over Alonso’s sleeping body, tells Sebastian, “Here lies your brother, / No better than the earth he lies upon / If he were that which now he’s like – that’s dead; / Whom I with this obedient steel, three inches of it, / Can lay to bed for ever” (ll. 276–80).

symbolise a layer of reality, which remains hidden from the eyes of most of the characters, but which, nevertheless, gives a more accurate testimony about the fictional world of the play. In a significant portion of the plot, this “dreamy” reality is, furthermore, mediated through the ghost of the dead King Hamlet. When young Hamlet expresses his doubts about the veracity of the nocturnal figure, assuming that he “May be the devil, and the devil hath power / T’assume a pleasing shape”, he not only iterates the mainstream argument of the Bible (2 Cor 11: 14: “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light”), but also refers to the mediaeval theology of dreams, as articulated by Isidore of Seville and others (see Chapter 3. 1). To Hamlet, the ghost belongs to the same sphere as the “bad dreams”, which he mentions before Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and which designate the condition of his life.

The question to which Hamlet seeks an answer is whether life after death has the same nightmarish quality as temporal human existence or whether death provides man with a relief in the form of a dreamless sleep. Although, within the context of the late Renaissance, Hamlet here exhibits a distinctive element of existential anxiety, the problem itself was not altogether new in Shakespeare’s time. Socrates had already raised such questions in Plato’s *Apology*, where he offers two possible solutions:

> Death is one of two things: either for the dead it is like being nothing and having no perception or anything, or as people say, it is a kind of change, a removal of the soul from here to another place. And if, first, it offers no perception but is like the sleep of a man who sees nothing even in a dream [οἷον ὕπνος ἐπειδάν τις καθεύδων μηδ᾽ ὄναρ μηδὲν ὁρᾷ], death would be a wonderful benefit[.][74]

For Socrates, both options are equally a gain (“If a person, on arriving in the next world and being rid of these self-proclaimed judges here, is going to find the true judges, […] would that be a bad removal?”);[75] yet for Hamlet, the possibility of death being like a sleep filled with dreams is to be dreaded:

> *Hamlet.* To be, or not to be; that is the question;
> Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep –
> No more, and by a sleep to say we end
> The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to – ’tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep.
> To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there’s the rub,
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
> Must give us pause. […]

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[74] Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, 91 = 40c–d.
[75] Plato, *Apology of Socrates*, 93 = 41a.

Who would these fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
(3. 1. 58–70, 78–84)

The most distinctive – and perhaps most surprising – aspect of Hamlet's contemplation of the afterlife is its openly un-Christian nature, which was to some depth addressed by Julian C. Rice.[76] Not only is Hamlet not sure whether there is something after death – which he identifies with the image of sleep – but the idea that there might be something – "dreams" – makes him fasten all his hopes on the miseries of earthly life. If he could choose, oblivion would be the option "Devoutly to be wished", while "the dread of something after death", in his view, only corrupts and paralyses the human mind. Dreams in the sleep of death are not seen as a reward – they are presented as a worse punishment than earthly nightmares. The image of Christian death from the speech is thus far from being the typical *consolatio*, but rather supports Hamlet's *contemptus mundi* attitude, expressed in earlier phases of the play.

In this respect, it is interesting to compare the canonical version of the passage with its Q1 variant. Although the Quarto reading is usually considered as a "bad", garbled version of Shakespeare's original, the differences in the language of both versions are only a minor issue compared to the thematic and ideological contrast between the two texts:

*Ham.* To be, or not to be – ay, there's the point.
To die, to sleep – is that all? Ay, all.
No, to sleep, to dream – ay, marry, there it goes,
For in that dream of death, when we're awaked
And borne before an everlasting judge
From whence no passenger ever returned –
The undiscovered country, at whose sight
The happy smile and the accursed damned.
But for this, the joyful hope of this,
Whol'd bear the scorns and flattery of the world –
[…]
But for a hope of something after death[?]
(sc. 7, ll. 115–24, 132)[77]

Whereas in the canonical version of the passage, dreams in the sleep of death are just a speculation, in the Q1 version, they are presented as a given fact. In accordance with Christian doctrine, death is not presented merely as an end of one's temporal existence or a form of its continuation, but an awakening into a new life. A typical Christian theme is also

[76] See Julian C. Rice, "Hamlet and the Dream of Something after Death", *Hartford Studies in Literature* 6 (1974): 109–16.
[77] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, ed. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006).

the image of the eternal Judge (cf. Plato, whose judges were, however, pagan), who rewards the righteous ("happy")[78] and punishes the unjust. Most importantly, while, according to F1, men willingly suffer life owing to "the dread of something after death", in Q1, it is "a hope of something after that" that motivates them not to despair. Although the soliloquy continues with the list of ills of earthly life, known from the Folio reading, and the admission that the idea of death "makes us rather bear those evils we have / Than fly to others that we know not of" (ll. 134f), the anxiety of the argument remains on a theologically mainstream level: people accept their earthly fortunes obediently, because any trespass might ultimately be punished by the Judge.

It is difficult to determine the reason for the difference between the two readings. Even if we were to accept the old-fashioned theory of memorial reconstruction and assume that the Q1 reading is a faulty report, the different philosophical framework of the version would still remain unexplained. Rice suggests that a later reviser might have wanted to produce a more acceptable version and therefore "censored" Hamlet's agnosticism.[79] Some indication of the textual history of the Q1 reading might be provided by the title-page of the 1603 edition, which advertises the text "As it hath beene diuerse times acted by his Highnesse seruants in the Citie of London: as also in the two Vniuersities of Cambridge and Oxford, and else-where". It is therefore possible that the Q1 text represents an acting version which Shakespeare's company found more suitable for academic audiences. Since the early eighteenth-century German adaptation of the story, *Der bestrafte Brudermord*, which is, in many respects, closer to the First Quarto than the Folio and is generally considered as being influenced by a pre-canonical version of *Hamlet* (be it *Ur-Hamlet* or an earlier Shakespearian text), does not contain the soliloquy at all, it is, in fact, impossible to state whether the "Christian" variant was the original conception or a later revision. We can, however, safely assume that by 1604, when the Second Quarto (containing the standard reading of the speech) was printed, the "agnostic" form of Hamlet's contemplation was preferred either by the owners of the text, or the dramatist himself.[80]

The two radically different variants of the play pose a problem for a dramatic reading of the soliloquy as well. Whereas, in Q2 and F1, the "To be, or not to be" speech takes place in Act 3, Scene 1, at the point where Hamlet has already arranged the

[78] In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English, "happy", especially in the connection with the dead, could mean "blessed". See "happy, *adj.*", *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

[79] See Rice 115.

[80] Lukeš contests the popular "sentimental-courtesy hypothesis" that it was Shakespeare's colleagues-actors who sent the "authorised version" of the text to the publisher to replace the "bad" quarto of 1603, claiming that the initiative was probably on the side of the dramatic author himself, who wanted to clear his reputation after the publication of a compromise version of one of his most significant works. See Lukeš 123–24.

production of “The Murder of Gonzago” before the King, Q1 places the passage in an early phase of scene 6, before the actors have even arrived in Elsinore. Levin L. Schücking was one of the first to note that the soliloquy “shows no signs of belonging to the particular scene in which appears”, suggesting that “it seems unlikely that he [*i.e.*, Hamlet] would give himself up to far-fetching reflections on the subject of life and death”.[81] Harry Levin, likewise, observes that the soliloquy is “so detached” from the immediate dramatic context of the play that it allows its double position in the *sujet*, although he, unlike Schücking (who prefers the Q1 arrangement), considers the Q1 order of the scenes as a misplacement.[82] Lukeš observes that the deeply contemplative nature of the speech serves a dramatic purpose, which the double placement of the passage reflects: while in the canonical text, the dynamic activity generated by the “Hecuba” soliloquy of scene 2. 2 is nullified by the “To be, or not to be” speech and needs to be re-activated, as it were, in scene 4. 4 by the “How all occasions do inform against me” soliloquy (this one is omitted in the F version), in Q1, the “To be, or not to be” *precedes* the “Hecuba” speech (which is at the end of scene 6), thus moving straight from contemplation to resolution, without a need for the soliloquy on the coast (not present in Q1).[83]

Despite their effort to reconcile the soliloquy with the rest of the play, such observations fail (or rather, do not even attempt) to answer the question why the “To be, or not to be” speech is the only one of Hamlet’s seven soliloquies[84] that seems to lack an obvious dramatic impulse and its motivation is never clarified by either preceding or following story material. Although the presence of a “detached” speech in a play is not, in principle, unthinkable (especially if it is a soliloquy), in the case of *Hamlet*, its use would not only be inconsistent with the employment of similar passages in other parts of the play, but would also contradict the delineation of Hamlet himself as a dramatic character. In spite of the popular perception of Hamlet as an irresolute, melancholy and contemplative

[81] Levin L. Schücking, *The Meaning of Hamlet*, trans. Graham Rawson (London: Oxford UP, 1937) 115.

[82] See Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* (New York: Oxford UP, 1959) 68. The same detachment of the soliloquy is stressed by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, who mention a number of modern productions of the canonical version of the play which adopt the (in Thomspon and Taylor’s words) “more logical” Q1 placing, or even place it where the Hamlet’s last soliloquy on the coast belongs (see Introduction, in *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare [London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006] 1–137 at 18–19).

[83] See Lukeš 115–16. Although the “To be or not to be” speech, as we have mentioned, is not present in the German play, *Der bestrafte Brudermord* copies the first quarto’s chronology “test with Ophelia” ( = “To be or not to be”) – “arrival of the actors” ( = “Hecuba”), which the canonical *Hamlet* reverses.

[84] “O that this too too solid flesh would melt”, following the announcement of King Claudius’s accession to the Danish throne (1. 2. 129–59); “O all you host of heaven!”, following Hamlet’s first encounter with the ghost (1. 5. 92–113); “O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!”, following a player’s speech about Hecuba (2. 2. 527–82); “To be, or not to be”, preceding the test with Ophelia (3. 1. 58–91); “’Tis now the very witching time of night”, following the play-within-a-play (3. 2. 358–69); “Now might I do it pat, now a is praying”, pronounced behind the praying King (3. 3. 73–96); and “How all occasions do inform against me”, following the conversation with a Norwegian captain (4. 4. 9. 22–56).

soul, his image in the play is clearly not one of a philosopher: in the "nunnery scene", Ophelia explicitly mentions his reputation (in this particular order) as a courtier, a soldier and a scholar[85] (3. 1. 150), and Fortinbras, at the very end of the play, orders four captains to "Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage", expressing a conviction that "he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royally" (5. 2. 340, 341f). When Hamlet soliloquises, he clearly first and foremost comments upon specific situations in which he has found himself, and only secondly are his observations applicable to the state of mankind in general. The idea that he would suddenly appear on stage, in a crucial phase of the advancement of the story, and pronounce a non-pertinent philosophical argument is almost bizarre.

The solution to the problem of a dramatic reading of the passage might lie in the re-interpretation of its generally accepted meaning. For more than a century, the orthodox critical position has been that the "To be, or not to be" speech discusses suicide, be it from a purely philosophical perspective, or from a perspective of a suicidal individual.[86] Although some earlier literary critics admitted that this reading poses some logical difficulties,[87] it was not until the 1960s that a theory appeared that Hamlet's words, in fact, deal with an action against Claudius, and not one's own life.[88] The most coherent version has so far been offered by Bernard Grebanier's study, *The Heart of Hamlet*.[89] For Grebanier, the idea that Hamlet would consider suicide is "a conception totally wanting in tragic dignity"[90] and the soliloquy has to be understood as Hamlet's inner debate on the point of crisis: he knows that the evening performance at court will be crucial to his plan, but is not yet sure how he will manage to announce the King's guilt publicly and bring him to justice. The first words of the soliloquy, "To be, or not to be", Grebanier claims, do not signify "To live, or not to live", but rather refer to an undisclosed decision by Hamlet as to

[85] The word "scholar" in Elizabethan English meant simply a person who had received or was receiving a university education, without necessarily suggesting a thinker (see "scholar, *n.*", *The Oxford English Dictionary*). Cf. Marcellus addressing Horatio upon the first entrance of the ghost, "Thou art a scholar – speak to it, Horatio" (1. 1. 40), or Lady More's asking her son-in-law in *Sir Thomas More*, "You are a scholar: / I pray ye tell me, may one credit dreams?" (4. 2. 5f).

[86] The first one to voice this opinion was A. C. Bradley in 1904. See A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1905) 98, fn. 1.

[87] Schücking, for instance, notes that, after the arrangement of the "mouse-trap" for Claudius and on the path to his revenge, Hamlet should rather be "in a state of tension, wondering whether the mine he has laid will explode" (see Schücking 115); to explain the sudden change in Hamlet's behaviour, John Dover Wilson creates a construction that the Prince has forgotten about the ghost or the plot, finding himself in a state of "complete unconsciousness […]; back in the mood of the soliloquy which begins 'O that this too-too sullied flesh would melt'" (see Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 127).

[88] For a summary of the discussion of the meaning of Hamlet's fourth soliloquy, see Vincent F. Petronella, "Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' Soliloquy: Once More unto the Breach", *Studies in Philology* 71 (1974): 72–88.

[89] See Grebanier, *The Heart of Hamlet*, 203–12.

[90] Grebanier, *The Heart of Hamlet*, 205.

how he should act when Claudius reveals his guilt to him ("Is my plan to be, or not to be"). The "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", which the mind has to suffer, are, then, not the consequences of being alive, but the destiny (moderated by a dubious supernatural agent) asking Hamlet to act under impossible conditions – that is, to avenge, but at the same time wait for a proof which may or may not come. To take "arms against a sea of troubles," and, "by opposing, end them", according to Grebanier, outlines an alternative possibility: not to wait, but rather hurl oneself into a swirl of events (like a man with a puny sword trying to conquer the sea), kill the well-protected Claudius even without an apparent justification, but, consequently, cause one's own destruction.

At this point, the debate about the temporal consequences of human action turns into a more philosophical speculation of the human lot in the afterlife. The reading of this part in some aspects corresponds to the traditional interpretation of the speech, but, according to the "non-suicidal" reading, the concept of the death-as-sleep metaphor is given a firm dramatic context. If Hamlet, by murdering his uncle, falls into a sleep which would end the "heartache and the thousand natural shocks", it would be a result "Devoutly to be wished". But would that action be worth risking the afterlife? What kind of reward or punishment awaits a revenger, especially if his victim is a lawful king? If we accept this reading of Hamlet's thoughts, an interesting counterpart to his dilemma can be seen in Macbeth's contemplating the murder of King Duncan:

> *Macbeth.* If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly. If th'assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
> With his surcease success: that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all, here,
> But here upon this bank and shoal of time,
> We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
> We still have judgement here, that we but teach
> Bloody instructions which, being taught, return
> To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice
> Commends th'ingredience of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips.
> (*Macbeth* 1. 7. 1–12)

Macbeth, too, would wish an action without a penalty. But whereas Hamlet would happily accept the temporal justice and is only afraid of consequences in the life to come, Macbeth is ready to risk the divine punishment and all he fears is human law and its mechanisms. As we know, Macbeth's deeds are immediately condemned by divine agencies and human justice, too, is not long in coming. In the case of *Hamlet*, however, the mode of the Prince's death is more ambiguous. He dies as Grebanier's interpretation of Hamlet's soliloquy predicts: murdered by the well-secured King and his circle. And although he

succeeds in slaughtering Claudius spiritually unprepared (as he resolved when spotting him at prayer after the play), the audience never learn whether his action is theologically justifiable. The question of the quality of Hamlet's eternal sleep thus still remains open, as it did in his soliloquy.

If we return to the two variants of the speech, it is significant to note that Grebanier's theory of the meaning of Hamlet's fourth soliloquy is largely based upon the lines which are omitted from the Q1 version. The placement of the passage – without, however, the portions that firmly fix it in one specific point of the story – in a different phase of the development of the plot (soon after Hamlet's first encounter with the ghost), would therefore not contradict the "non-suicidal" interpretation of the canonical version. Although any attempt to answer the question of why the speech is in Q1 prefixed before the arrival of the actors is a journey on highly speculative territory, it is the textual difference between the two versions of the passage that might help us to reach a plausible hypothesis.

Probably at some point in early 1594, the Chamberlain's Men obtained a play about Hamlet, whose existence is first securely recorded in 1589 by Thomas Nashe's introduction to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* and whose popularity is further corroborated by a 1596 remark in Thomas Lodge's *Wits Miserie*. It is possible that the previous owner of the text was the then defunct Pembroke's Men, since the play was produced by the joint Chamberlain's and Admiral's Men at Newington Butts in June 1594, together with *Titus Andronicus* and *The Taming of a Shrew*, which were obtained from the same company.[91] At some point between this year and about 1600, Shakespeare undertook the task of revising *Hamlet* to suit better the purposes of the Chamberlain's Men and the tastes of the late 1590s theatregoers. The fullest result is probably presented by the Second Quarto of the play, which is universally considered as having been typeset from Shakespeare's foul papers. A slightly alternative reading of this revised version is offered by F1, which contains some passages not present in Q2, but, at the same time, omits some others.

However, since both the Q2 and F1 versions of *Hamlet* are too long to be acting texts, it is possible that the reviser – someone other than Shakespeare – when preparing a stage version of the play around 1600, combined the Shakespearian text with the previously successful *Ur-Hamlet*, whose copy was still in the company's possession. It is also conceivable that there was a customised version of *Hamlet*, made specifically for productions at Oxford and Cambridge, which was different from the standard Globe text and which respected the pre-Shakespearian play even more. It would be logical that this

[91] See Henslowe, *Henslowe's Diary* II, 163.

occasional version, which was of less value for the acting company, found its way into print in 1603, rather than the text that was regularly staged in London public theatres. This would explain the "*Ur-Hamletian*" order of scenes, as witnessed by the German adaptation,[92] combined with some popular Shakespearian additions, which might have been originally written for a different dramatic context, as represented by the full draft. The omission of certain lines from the "To be, or not to be" speech itself might then be the reviser's clumsy attempt at relieving the rôle of Hamlet, but also an intentional effort to efface the inconsistencies which had risen as a result of the restructuring of the dramatic material. That the result lacks the literary qualities of the canonical Shakespearian text is an entirely different question that should not bother us very much: as we stated earlier, staging versions of Elizabethan plays tended to sacrifice literary merits of the authorial draft in favour of elementary dramatics.

Whether our hypothesis about the genesis and the interpretation of Hamlet's soliloquy and the dramatic situation in question is correct or not, several general statements about the employment of the death-as-sleep topos in the play can be made. Whereas, in the examples of Shakespeare's earlier works discussed above, the link between sleep and death is used chiefly as an element in the development of the plot, either literally creating, complicating or drawing attention to certain dramatic situations (as in *Romeo and Juliet*), or pervading the story as an overarching motif, filling the advancements of the story with specific meaning (as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), in *Hamlet*, the metaphor is pertinent to a single character and the constellation of his mind rather than to the play as a whole. It helps to particularise and present to the audience Hamlet's psychomachy and elucidates his subsequent behaviour. The quality of sleep, presented as a metaphor of the quality of the afterlife, illustrates some of the ethical and metaphysical questions with which the central character has to deal. In this respect, it is significant to note that the motif was removed from the main action of the play, to be inserted in a soliloquy, which, by definition, cannot advance the plot. Rather than being an active participant in the drama, the trope thus offers a viewpoint, a prism through which the audience can perceive it and try and interpret it.

[92] For a hypothesis that English actors brought a late sixteenth-century play about Hamlet to the Continent and that this play might have been a prime source for *Der bestrafte Brudermord*, see Lukeš 116–17. Cf. Thompson and Taylor, Introduction, in *Hamlet: The Texts of 1603 and 1623*, 1–39 at 17: "The very existence of the German text […] seems to attest to the likelihood of performances in Germany of something quite like Q1 in the early seventeenth century."

Certain features of the employment of the death-as-sleep metaphor in *Hamlet* are also discernible in Shakespeare's "problem play" *Measure for Measure*, written a couple of years later. While the motif again becomes a part of the central action of the play, its prime function is to explore questions transcending the immediate dramatic context and to delineate the minds of the specific characters involved in the dramatic situation. Furthermore, the *contemptus mundi* attitude, invoked by Hamlet's soliloquies, is clearly discernible in *Measure for Measure* as well.

One of the crucial themes pervading the play is how to live a worthy life and die a worthy death. The city of Vienna, where *Measure for Measure* takes place, is so corrupt that Duke Vincentio decides to step aside and let the named governor, Angelo, enforce the law instead of him. "Liberty plucks Justice by the nose, / The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart / Goes all decorum", explains the Duke: this happens if the rules are not properly followed (1. 3. 29–31). For the first time, the Duke uses the key image of death both in its ordinary sense and as a designation of corruption of a living thing: "so our decrees, / Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead" (ll. 27f). If the law fails to fulfil its purpose, it is *de facto* dead and one may thus as well make it dead literally, by abandoning it entirely.

Angelo decides to apply this philosophy to human life: if life loses its innocence and purity, it loses its purpose and there is no sense in preserving it. For an offence otherwise humanly pardonable, Claudio is sentenced to death and, as Angelo emphasises, if he himself should be found guilty, "let [his] own judgement pattern out [his] death" (2. 1. 30). When Isabella comes to plead to Angelo to alter his verdict, however, he tries to force her into sacrificing her chastity, asking her to commit the same sin for which he pronounced the verdict of death over Claudio and, potentially, over himself as well. When asked whether she would "lay down the treasures of [her] body" (2. 4. 96) in order to save her brother, Isabella asserts that she would prefer death to a shameful life:

> [*Isabella.*] […] were I under the terms of death,
> Th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
> And strip myself to death as to a bed
> That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
> My body up to shame.
> (2. 4. 100–104)

The imagery of Isabella's words, evoking the mediaeval concept of *imitatio Christi*, and the metaphor of death as "a bed / That longing have been sick for" create an image of dying, which is in a sharp contrast to Hamlet's contemplations (the motif of bed, combined with Isabella's devotion, evokes a symbolic bridal bed, reuniting her by means of death

with Christ). The death of a good person is, according to Isabella, more valuable than clinging to life at the expense of compromising one's mind (and, in her case, body as well). In other words, if a person manages to maintain the integrity of his or her beliefs, death is nothing to be dreaded. When Angelo asserts that her attitude will not save Claudio's life, Isabella replies, "Better it were a brother died at once / Than that a sister, by redeeming him, / Should die for ever" (ll. 107–109). Although no specific doctrine is mentioned, Isabella's observations make it clear that her concept of death is a Christian one: it can be both a welcome relief from earthly miseries and a punishment in the form of everlasting damnation. Heaven and hell (which, in Isabella's case, would paradoxically come through a perverted "redemption") are thus reality, more important than the reality of human life.

An oscillation between the possibilities of eternal reward or damnation functions as the thematic basis for the exchange between the Duke (disguised as a friar), Isabella and Claudio in scene 3. 1. At the beginning of the scene, the Duke tries to lessen Claudio's fear of dying, stressing the insubstantial and uncertain quality of life, similar to a dream:

> [*Duke.*] Thou hast nor youth nor age,
> But as it were an after-dinner's sleep
> Dreaming on both; for all thy blessèd youth
> Becomes as agèd, and doth beg the alms
> Of palsied eld; and when thou art old and rich,
> Thou hast neither heat, affection, limb, nor beauty
> To make thy riches pleasant.
> (3. 1. 32–38)

The Duke continues to stress the miseries of the human life, which "none but fools would keep" (l. 8). According to his words, a man is but "death's fool", since "For him [he] [labours] by [his] flight to shun, / And yet [runs] toward him still" (ll. 11–13). "Thy best rest," the Duke concludes, "is sleep / And that thou oft provok'st, yet grossly fear'st / Thy death, which is no more" (ll. 17–19). Claudio initially seems to be reconciled with death, and, paraphrasing the Gospel of Matthew (16: 25), admits that "To sue to live, I find I seek to die, / And seeking death, find live" (l. 43f).

Being aware of his own sinful nature, however, Claudio is soon overcome by Hamletian misgivings about what kind of experience he might expect in that sleep of death:

> *Claudio.* Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
> To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod, and the dilated spirit
> To bath in fiery floods, or to reside
> In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice[.]
> […]
> The weariest and most loathèd worldly life

> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature is a paradise
> To what we fear of death.
>
> (3. 1. 118–23, 129–32)

Unlike Isabella, who is firm in her belief in the reward after death for the righteous, Claudio reverses his previous welcome of dying and wishes to adjourn the moment as much as possible. The idea of hell is too threatening to him to risk the afterlife. When he asks his sister to accept Angelo's proposal in order to save him, he is fiercely rejected. Isabella knows that by giving Claudio life through sin, she would lose the death of the rightful both for her brother and herself. Her exasperated line "I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death" thus does not necessarily need to be an ill wish, but a desperate hope that, by accepting death without vice, her brother's dreams after death will still be good ones.

# Conclusion

To sleep, perchance to dream.
(*Hamlet* 3. 1. 67)

When Thomas Tryon, the author of several popular early modern English self-help books (1634–1703), addressed his readers at the beginning of his *A Treatise of Dreams and Visions* (1689), he felt the need to emphasise that his work had not been written for those who merely held dreams in contempt. These people, Tryon insisted, "like the *deaf Adder, will not hear the Voice of the Charmer*[*:*] *charm he never so wisely*", being only "full of themselves, that is of *Noise* and *Vanity*". On the other hand, he also expressed the hope that, to "the *meek* and *modest* souls, that in humility daily wait at the Gates of *Wisdom's Temple*", his book would be "both acceptable, and in some kind useful".[1]

Tryon's words, written more than seventy years after Shakespeare's death, demonstrate that – in spite of the rapid decline of the epistemological prestige of sleep phenomena over the course of the seventeenth century – the pre-Freudian world always had a large enough constituency of audience, for whom the privileged status of dreams as a source of special knowledge of some kind was a living concept, embedded in their cultural awareness. For every sceptic, such as Aristotle, Cicero, Vanini, or Osborne, history always had in store some Herophilos, Artemidorus, Cardano, or early Descartes, who was ready to subscribe to a supernatural explanation of man's oneiric experiences. Even Nashe, whose assessment of observing dreams as superstitious is quoted by every critic interested in demonstrating the low esteem in which dreams were held by Elizabethans, populated the nocturnal world with elves, faeries, goblins and daemons, which, according to him, commonly attacked defenceless sleepers.

When Shakespeare entered the world of theatre, these nocturnal phenomena might have lost much of their ancient and mediaeval mystique, but were still a subject of considerable interest, both in erudite and popular discourse. As we have demonstrated in previous chapters, the discussion of sleeping and dreaming in early modern England ranged from learned tracts, through medical manuals (both domestic and Continental translations), to cheap popular pamphlets. Dream interpretation manuals were a common article in the private libraries of literate townsmen and accounts of sleep experiences are scattered through Elizabethan and Jacobean commonplace-books. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that early modern reading and theatregoing audiences' sensitivity to

[1] Tryon 4. (Original emphasis.)

fictitious representations of these motifs was extremely high and that the theatre attendees in all probability readily associated them with their real-life convictions and experiences. This allowed the dramatists of the time to transform these shared intellectual and cultural commonplaces into effective dramatic devices, which were able to induce certain kinds of moods, anticipation, and emotional response on the part of the audience.

Apart from this, so to speak, "immediate" cultural situation, there also existed a centuries-long tradition of employing sleep phenomena in fictional stories. Sleep, dreams, and night as their associate had played significant rôles in the design and development of literary plots since the very beginnings of Western literature, spanning all possible literary forms and genres (although they were conventionally more associated with tragic and serious stories rather than comedic plots). It is also remarkable to observe, that – in spite of the fact that the history of the use of sleep phenomena in belles-lettres was not entirely continuous – the topoi seem always to have (after some period of development and refining) adopted certain functions, common to most literary works and authors. Typically, these recalled past events and foreboded future ones, creating suspense, announcing the presence of the Unseen, or giving the audience insight into the motivations and tendencies of fictional characters.

Although Shakespeare was not the first Elizabethan or Jacobean dramatist to make use of these tropes in his works, he was undoubtedly one of the most – if not the most – frequent and systematic writer in this respect. In the early 1590s, around the time when his career as a playwright began, the exploitation of the motifs of sleeping and dreaming in dramatic genres was especially popular and Shakespeare had already utilised them as technical devices in some of his earliest works. He was able to deploy both the array of literary prototypes of the topoi and the aura of uneasiness and ambiguity which surrounded them in the early modern cultural context so as to make them effective and, in many cases, indispensable components of his dramatic narratives – as opposed to most of his immediate predecessors who tended to utilise the motifs in a rather *ad hoc* manner, with little or no dramaturgical plan in mind.

As time went on, gradual changes may be observed in Shakespeare's use of sleep and dream phenomena as technical devices; in most cases, however, the tropes also retained certain rudimentary features, which allow certain generalising remarks to be made as to their dramatic effect and rôles throughout Shakespeare's canon. First, just as there are two oneiric gates in classical mythology and two main classes of dreams in ancient, mediaeval and humanistic dream lore, Shakespeare's use of sleeping and dreaming is largely dichotomic, working on two main levels. On the one hand, they contribute to the

process of delineation of individual characters, serving as an easy and economical way to explore the inner worlds, tendencies and dispositions of the fictive *dramatic personae*. On the other hand, the topoi often surpass the limits of just one figure on the stage and enter the dramatic language and syntax of an entire work. The line between these two functions is, however, seldom clearly defined and one dramatic image or situation can serve more than one dramatic purpose. Othello's bending over the sleeping Desdemona at first seems to be primarily the former's emotional climax, during which Othello's conflicting thoughts are exposed to the audience, who are supposed to pass their judgement upon the character. As we have demonstrated, however, the situation at the same time wittily manipulates the flow of dramatic time in order to provide the audience with an opportunity to prepare for the turbulent events of the plot, while reminding the spectators of key themes of the play. Similarly, the superficially characterisational dreams of King Richard III and the Duke of Richmond before the final battle of the War of the Roses do not merely fully expose Richard's wickedness and Richmond's predestination to be England's saviour, but also refer back to the past events of Shakespeare's first historical tetralogy and predict the saga's outcome, contributing to its dramatic unity. Sleeping and dreaming as technical devices therefore often serve multiple dramatic and narrative purposes.

The dualistic character of dreams, which were believed to have both natural and supernatural causes, as well as their uncertain status based on the belief that they stand in opposition to reason, are both reflected in Shakespeare's plays and contribute to the works' overall design and atmosphere. Whereas natural dreams allow for a deeper understanding of man's inner world, the supernatural ones become a meeting place of the divine and the profane, demonstrating the divine presence, constantly watching over and judging human deeds. Dreams of both kinds, however, can also present an evil temptation, testing the strength of the character. The same observation can be applied to sleep as well, which, despite its beneficial powers, might become a sign of spiritual sluggishness and moral decadence.

Instances can also be found, however, when Shakespeare did not hesitate to use the motifs of sleeping and dreaming as a kind of travesty of their ordinary employment. Whether he intended or not to keep Christopher Sly and his bizarre adventure as an integral part of or *The Taming of the Shrew*, the version of the story which has come down to us clearly shows that he was at least toying with the dream-framework tradition – normally associated with courtly poetry – with a habitual drunkard being the Dreamer. Similarly, the bitter-sweet character of Falstaff, who is ultimately rejected from the King's presence and

called an unwanted foolish dream, is, during his stage-time, several times comically exposed through his obnoxious sleeping habits.

Somewhere between the plane of character and that of plot of Shakespearian drama also stands the image of Night, the prime stage for both sleep and dreams. According to early modern cultural awareness, night shared with sleep phenomena the ambiguous nature of being both the time of beneficial rest and the moment when man was at his most vulnerable. Similarly to sleep and dreams, night is capable of influencing the design of the plot and the atmosphere of both individual scenes and the play as a whole; but it may also enter into an almost intimate relationship with the fictional characters, becoming their enemy or ally (or both). Night was an appropriate setting for certain enterprises, and the characters' frequent invocations to it – not dissimilar to the tradition of literary invocations to sleep – reveal that the entrances and exits of the nocturnal world on and from the stage can serve as a dramaturgical principle and a powerful impulse for the advancement of the plot.

The primary goal of the present discussion was to make, with the help of an historical approach, a dramaturgical inquiry into the employment of sleep, dream, and, by extension, nocturnal phenomena in the plays of Shakespeare, taking into consideration some of the most eminent works of his contemporaries as well. The present study has demonstrated that all the motifs under consideration appeared in Shakespeare's dramatic works more frequently than in the works of any other Elizabethan or Jacobean dramatist. Furthermore, despite the gradual change in their form and their growing tendency to serve an ornamental purpose, they never lost their powerful dramatic ethos. This fact can be attributed to an alliance of cultural and intellectual contexts, in which these topics played an important part and which shaped the tastes of early modern audiences; a rich literary tradition, upon which Shakespeare and other early modern authors could and did build; and, most importantly, an excellent sense of dramatic design on the part of the author. The greatest merit of Shakespeare's use of these phenomena in his plays lies not so much in the fact that he was continually returning to the topoi, but rather in the fresh, effective and very sensitive manner in which he employed them.

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I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.
(*The Tempest* 5. 1. 54–57)

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