

# How Dreams Reflect Place and Location?

Georg von Gaal: *Polylogikai Mulatság az Álomról és Alvásról* (1821)  
*Über den Schlaf* (1823)

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Dreams are signs in the proper sense of the word. They also reflect personal attitudes and psychological functions. They make the dreamer's behaviour transparent, and they express regularities in acquisition of space and localities. In any culture, the places (and locations), which occur in dreams, are modelled by the sign system of the world view used in the given society. By trans-cultural and comparative analysis it is easy to find far-reaching similarities in dreams from different ages and cultures.

Semiotic studies often refer to dreams or to dream analysis. Nevertheless, it is a less common fact that Freudian dream interpretation was not the very first attempt to decipher the 'signs of time and place' in dreams. As Raymond Firth (1973) has shown, Georg Friedrich Creuzer (from 1806 on) and especially Carl Gustav Carus (*Psyche: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele*, 1846) had already elaborated a scholarly system of the interpretation of symbols in dreams. Even before that time, for practical use of dream interpretations, the so-called dream-books served many generations. They date back to Ancient Egypt, or to Ancient Greece (see, for example, the dream-book by Artemidor) and they are also widely used today. Mantic use of dreams is common among the Aborigines in Australia, for the shamans of the world, or by addicts of gambling and lottery, etc. There are good scholarly works describing the comparative or cultural historical aspects of dreams.

To mention only some of the oldest and best-known sources, the Old Egyptian dream-book text has been preserved in the *Chester-Beatty Papyrus* from 1350 BC, major parts of an Assyrian dream-book (dated from 668 to 633 BC) were found in the Library of Assurbanipal, and the long tradition of Greek dream-reading was codified in the *Oneirocritica* (*Scrutiny of Dreams*) by Artemidorus of Daldis (2nd century AD). The *Somnia Danielis* (from the 7th century AD) was a compilation from old Mediterranean sources and it was particularly popular in Byzantium, where most of the old Slavic dream interpretations stem from.

Later it was also used as one of the main sources of Western European learned dream-books. The most famous Arabic dream-book (attributed to a certain Muhammad ben Sirin) can be dated as early as the 8th century AD, but the oldest full text of the work is known today only from 1451. An eccentric Humanist in Milan, Girolamo Cardano (Hieronymus Cardanus), suggested the first 'modern and scholarly' dream-book before 1562. His writings influenced German dream interpretations (from the *Traumbuch*, Basle, 1562 on). Baroque and romantic dream explanations paved the way for later physiological and psychological dream analysis – so successful in the 20th century.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I will deal with a special kind of dream interpretations, as practiced by the famous Hungarian writer and folklorist, Georg von Gaal (1783–1855). Among others, he was the author of the first published collection of Hungarian folktales (*Mährchen der Magyaren*, Wien, 1822) and of a multilingual anthology of proverbs and sayings (*Sprüchwörterbuch in sechs Sprachen*, Wien, 1830), which contains a thousand proverbs and phrases in Latin, German, Hungarian, English, French and Italian. Four more volumes of his multilingual proverb collection remain in (unfinished) manuscripts. His voluminous *Allgemeines deutsches Reimlexikon* also remains in manuscript. Gaal, for many years serving as a librarian to the famous aristocratic Esterházy family in Vienna, literate in many languages and personally familiar with many contemporary intellectuals, was a key person in the Vienna circles of historians and philologists.<sup>2</sup> He was maniacal in collecting texts and notes, and in writing and rewriting historical and literary

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<sup>1</sup> It is not my aim to give here any long history of the interpretation of dreams. There are hundreds of good books on dreams and dreaming. I list here only a handful of new, summarising works, with rich bibliographic references. On the anthropological context of dreams see Tedlock 1987, with fieldwork data from Juvet and Gessain 1997. The most famous contemporary description of sleep and dreaming is Juvet 1992. For cross-cultural companions of dream studies see, e.g., Esnoul et al. 1959; later: von Grunebaum, Caillois 1966; the same book in French: Caillois, von Grunebaum 1967. On the oldest Near East dreambooks see Oppenheim 1956. On Arabic dream books see Fahd 1966 (summarising his other works). Ibn Sirin's book is available in a new translation: Klopfer 1989. The new Artemidore text edition: Päck 1963. Popular dream-books from medieval Byzantium: Brackertz 1993. On medieval European dreambooks see Gotthardt 1912 and Fischer 1982. For European (folkloristic) dream traditions see Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1986, and Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Palmenfelt 1992. A recent study on a particular problem (dream and wakefulness in the Greek magical tales): Papachristophorou 2002. I do not list here the psychological, psychoanalytic or symbolic works on dreams.

<sup>2</sup> For a concise biography and a bibliography of Gaal, see my short summary in Voigt 1997, and recently Ujváry 2001, with further bibliography.

works, translations, etc. His personal and literary connections with many famous contemporary writers and historians make it simply impossible to check the sources of Gaal's remarks, references and cultural historical data.

In the first scientific journal in Hungary written entirely in Hungarian, *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*, in Volume IX (1821, pp. 3–25), Gaal published an interesting essay, *Polylogikai Mulatság az Álomról és Alvásról* ('Polylogical Entertainment on Dreams and Sleeping'). This article was mentioned in his first biographies, but otherwise it was completely forgotten in Hungary. We do not know anything about the background or about the actual purpose of Gaal's paper on dreams. It was a surprise to me when many years after publishing my first papers on Gaal, I found a German version of the same essay, *Über den Schlaf*, published in *Archiv für Geschichte, Statistik, Literatur und Kunst* (no. 108, September 8, 1823; no. 109, September 10, 1823; no. 125, October 17, 1823). It contains the first part of Gaal's Hungarian paper, but suddenly ends in the middle of the topic. There was no explanation given for why Gaal wanted to publish his fascinating paper also in German, and why he gave up on completing his idea.

A short summary of the essay on dreams would be as follows.

Dreams are so important in human life that ancient mythology treated its personification and included it in the Pantheon. Hesiod, Homer, Ovid and other authors describe the origin of Dream, its places and locations. Dream's children are Morpheus, Icalus, Phobetor, and Phantasus.<sup>3</sup> Its brothers are Death and Hope. Its symbol is the horn. In some places (as, for example, on the island of Delos) its appearance is a woman: Brizo. Endymion was doomed with eternal dream.

Exemplary stories concerning the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismundus of Luxemburg (1368–1437), the Pythagoreans, the 'Seven Sleepers', etc., are well known. Indian, Brahmanist and Japanese stories describe the power of the Dream. Not only authors in Classical Antiquity reported extraordinary dreams. Modern sources mention the name Johann Georg Hammer, who slept uninterrupted for 47 days in 1794. In England, a dream lasted a whole month. A French woman in 1809 slept for over fifteen months, with only short interruptions. A priest in Oxford in 1766 slept during the whole week, then awoke on Sundays, went to church, gave his sermon, returned home, ate his dinner and fell asleep for another week.<sup>4</sup> Among similar contemporary long-lasting dream

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<sup>3</sup> Here and in the following I follow Gaal's orthography for the names and the usage of capital letters.

<sup>4</sup> At this point the German version of Gaal's essay ends.

stories (from England, Hamburg and Rotterdam), there was also a well-known Hungarian case. András Hertzeg fell asleep on April 13, 1802 for six weeks. All these cases involve supra-normal dreams. However, animals can sleep or hibernate in 'normal' ways. Plants sleep as well, as their leaves clearly show. Monkeys do not sleep deeply. However, Aborigines in New South Wales sleep so deeply that their enemies can kill them. The posture of the sleeper (lying down or standing) is very different among animals and men.

As many reports show, *somnambulism* (sleep-walking) is an extraordinary phenomenon. A Jesuit was able to preach while sleeping. As the late Göttingen professor Wachner revealed about himself, he could compose Greek verses during his nightly dreams. Another German professor (Reusch) wrote an entire treatise on immortality while asleep. A 16th century Spanish artist, Caspar Bacerra, was once commissioned to create a sculpture of the Holy Virgin. One day, exhausted and desperate, he threw away his chisel and fell into deep sleep. In his dream, he saw a apparition who advised him to pick up a piece of burned wood from the fireplace and form it into the image of the Holy Virgin. He followed the advice and the finished sculpture won unsurpassed acclaim. Another similar story is known about the picture of the Virgin in the Annunciata Church in Florence: it was painted either by a sleeping artist or by angels. The famous doctor Avicenna could solve the most difficult problems while asleep. In the city of Bernstein, a person – while asleep – climbed a tree and collected the nestlings from a bird's nest. A young pharmacy assistant could compose and prepare medicaments while asleep. A similar case was reported in 1762 in Italy.

Dreams can be classified into various groups.

Sweet and nice dreams, according to the Philostratus story in Greek mythology, occur on the shores of Leuce Island. Sailors spending a night there would meet famous heroines and heroes in their dreams. Louis IX of France once appointed a constantly sleeping monk as the abbot of a monastery, referring to the event as proof that 'luck appears in dream'. A contemporary of Gaal, a certain Baron W., won a great sum in gambling in the following way: W. was tired, and fell asleep while gambling, and his stake-money was then multiplied several times, until he finally woke and went home with all the winnings.

The other group, i.e. dangerous dreams, is more common: Noah, Samson, many heroes of the Old Testament, and Greek and Roman mythology provide proof. Attila, King of the Huns, died because of a nosebleed on his wedding

night. Several sleeping rulers were killed by their enemies. Dream often appears together with its 'brother' Death. The stories mentioned by Pindar, or about Bion and Cleobis, show how Greek gods combined dream with easy (pleasant) dying. Historical anecdotes about Alexander the Great, Demosthenes, Pliny the Elder, Emperor Julian, Charlemagne, Francesco Petrarca, the Greek Emperor Leo, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux present different aspects of sleeping and dreaming. Curious descriptions tell of the sleeping and non-sleeping habits of different peoples and cultures. According to the common narrative on the origin of Chinese tealeaves, they grew from the eyelids of a pilgrim who never wanted to sleep. Christian saints and hermits sleep very little, or under severe circumstances. In fact, they torture themselves by avoiding normal sleep.

Gaal's concluding opinion is very practical: avoiding sleep is unhealthy because it breaks the rules of the common conduct of life. Insomnia is dangerous. Falcon trainers, as the first step in training, prevent the captured young birds from sleeping, forcing them in that way to forget their desire for freedom.

At this point, without any conclusion, Gaal's essay ends.

There are about fifty footnotes and references in Gaal's paper. In most of them he refers to classical *loci*, to the works of Italian poets such as Torquato Tasso and Ariosto, to the English poet Edward Young, to Tibullus, to the famous Neo-Latin Jesuit poet, Sidronius Hosschius (Hosch) et al. Church history or the history of botany, handbooks or compilations of mythology, and Greek (and other) archaeology are mentioned as the sources of some of Gaal's examples. It is obvious that several collections of anecdotes or curiosities were lying on his desk while he was writing his essay. For example, he quotes a two-volume book, *Museum des Wundervollen*, but without closer reference to its compiler or publisher. It is difficult indeed to identify his references, because he was using abbreviations of some works generally known among the intellectuals then, but completely forgotten since. Even if we can identify the origin of one of Gaal's examples, we might find even more puzzling the search for his direct source. For example, his remark on the first case of somnambulism (on the preaching Jesuit sleepwalker) includes a bibliographical reference: *Philosophia/ curiosa Eusebii Nierenbergii*. We know that Juan Eusebio Nieremberg y Otin (1595–1658) was a Spanish Jesuit (of German origin), who wrote theological treatises on temporality vs. eternity, holy life, divine grace, etc., and biographies of famous monks, including Ignacio Loyola. How could Gaal know about his one-and-a-half century old book?

Gaal was a polyglot. He knew the book on somnambulism by a certain Horst, written in Latin. He also used a French publication of art curiosities (*Anecdotes des Beaux Arts*). And on the same page (dealing with the pharmacy assistant's case) he refers to the third volume of collected works (*Opusculi scelti sulle scienze et sulle arti*) of the Italian poet and educator, Francesco Soave (1743–1806). Gaal used journals, almanacs and all kinds of popular publications. His sample of dreams and sleeping is a mirror of the mind of a truly learned man.

The Latinised Greek word *polylogical* (its meaning might be 'according to several logics') in the title of his paper shows that the author compiled the essay from different sources. Thus, it is neither a mythological summary, nor a collection of amusing anecdotes. The other formulation in the title (the Hungarian *Mulatság*, meaning 'entertainment') refers to the essayistic, 'light' character of the publication. Gaal compiled a list of his own manuscripts and publications, entitled *Verzeichniss der Manuscripten-Sammlung – Georgs v. Gaal* (see Voigt 1997: 208–209), in which we find similar titles containing several thematic groups of texts, e. g., *Polysitia 2 Bände*, *Polytrophe 10 Octavbände*, *Polydora Quartband*, *Polyhymnia Quartband*, etc. It is quite obvious that, for a time, Gaal also collected data and stories of dreams and sleeping, and he used the excerpts to write his essay.

We do not know what might have been his exact reason for collecting such data. Gaal does not speak of dream-brooks or dream interpretations, and he does not say anything about the romantic theory of equating poetry with dreams. He gave only a rough categorisation, and the cases concerning ancient or modern heroes, rulers and common people, gods and animals, Europe or Asia, follow each other without proper systematisation.

When we compare the two versions of Gaal's papers, we do not learn much more about the author's intentions. The Hungarian version (1821) is longer, and was published in two parts. It contains a kind of introduction, but it does not have a formal ending. Still, it does not look like a fragment either. Gaal just stopped when he felt he was ready. He did not see the necessity of summing up his ideas in any scholarly way. The German version is much shorter, and it is not a full text either. After less than the first third of his Hungarian essay was written, Gaal simply stopped to translate and publish the further parts (this was clearly not planned, because even the second German part promised a continuation. We can only guess that Gaal suddenly had another, more important and time-consuming task). On the other hand, he included the German version with a new

introductory paragraph containing a dozen 'new' references to classical authors (Cicero, Ovid, Aristotle, Homer, etc.), and in footnote *i*) we find again new quotations from one German and two French dramas: the last one is from Voltaire. It is obvious, after the publication of the 1821 paper, that Gaal continued his excerpt collection of dreams. In the first (new) sentence of the German version, Gaal stresses the 'natural' importance of the dream.

This was also expressed by the epigraph from the Greek comedy writer, Menander: Ὑπνος δὲ πᾶσιν ἔσιν ὑγεία βίου ('for all beings sleep is the health of life').

How do such dream stories in Gaal's paper (or in other, similar collections of dream narratives) reflect place and location? The easy answer is very short and general: dreams may reflect any place and any time, and they appear at any place and in any time.

As we have already said, we know of many books on dreams in different cultures, and on the history of dream interpretations. To complete or to print and reprint dream-books is an uninterrupted tradition in modern Europe. Gaal surely knew of such publications, but he does not refer to them (I cannot guess why he neglected that source material). On the other hand we do not know much about similar treatises on dreams, since we are collecting only 'cultural historical data' to describe dreams. Gaal's essay is a rare exception for his time, presenting data on dreams not only because of their symbolism but also for their pragmatics and semantics.

From the same time, and with the same ambitions to give many cases for extraordinary dreams, we know of an important book on dreams by a German intellectual. Dream analysis historians often mention Schubert's work *Die Symbolik des Traumes* (Bamberg 1814, and soon in four other editions). Gotthilf Heinrich Schubert (1780–1860) was a natural philosopher and dramatic writer, who took a poetic interest in unconscious images and interpreted dreams from a somewhat mystical viewpoint (see Firth 1973: 101). Schubert's book influenced the practical Danish dream-books of the 1860s printed by Julius Strandberg (see Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1986: 256). Schubert's 'analytic' method was quoted and used also by Sigmund Freud, whose 'cultural-historical' dream analysis deserves more attention (both Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, in addition to their psychoanalytical dream interpretations, also made interesting remarks on dreams from the point of view of comparative cultural history). Gaal's early paper goes further in that

direction: it is in fact a short cultural history of dreams, and not a presentation of any applied dream interpretation method. But before making any final evaluation of Gaal's dream concepts, we should know more about his sources.

In this paper I will not consider the history of Hungarian dream studies. Still I have to make at least two further remarks.

1. Hungarians seem to be more connected with 'dream' than other peoples.

The chieftain of the 'land-taking' Hungarians (i.e. the population that conquered the Carpathian basin, the present home of the Hungarians, by about 896 AD) was Prince Árpád, and his father was Álmos, the very first ruler of the Hungarians, who is known from medieval sources on Hungary history. The name Chieftain/Prince Álmos is from a well-known Hungarian word, derived from the common noun *álm* ('dream'), meaning '(something) connected with a dream'. The connection was explained by the oldest Hungarian chronicle (*Gesta Hungarorum*) from the Middle Ages (from the 13th century). The writer, whose name is not mentioned in the chronicle has been referred to as 'Anonymous'. Chapter 3, entitled 'De Almo primo duce' ('On Almos, the first prince'), describes the event briefly (Anonymous 1991: 36):

*Sed ab eventu divino est nominatus Almus, quia matri eius pregnantis per sompnum apparuit divina visio in forma asturis, que quasi veniens eam gravidavit... Quia ergo sompnum in lingua Hungarica dicitur 'almu' et illius ortus per sompnum fuit pronosticatum, ideo ipse vocatus est Almus. Vel ideo vocatus est Almus, id est sanctus, quia ex progenie eius sancti reges et duces erant nascituri.*<sup>5</sup>

The text describes how in the dream a 'divine vision' came to a woman in the form of a predatory bird, and made her pregnant.

In one sentence: the first ruler of the Hungarians emerged from a dream. Every Hungarian knows that story. It is curious that Gaal did not refer to it.

2. Hungarian scholars too seem to be more connected with dreams than other scholars are.

The famous folklorist and father of psychoanalytic anthropology, Géza Róheim (1891–1953), wrote extensively on dreams, not only about the 'time of the dreams' in the mythology of Central Australian Aborigines, among whom he

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<sup>5</sup> In short: the first leader of the Hungarians was named after a dream (*álm*), and being thus of sacred origin, he was the progenitor of sacred kings and leaders of the Hungarians.

took a long field trip (1928–1931), but also on dreams in general. His book, *Eternal Ones of the Dream* (*Altjiranga mitjina* in the Aranda language of Central Australia) is about myth and ritual, dreams and fantasies and their role in the lives of primitive man (Róheim 1945). Róheim's later book (1952) is of a more general character: 'Gates of the dream' open the path towards the world of basic dreams, animism, shamans, songs of the sirens, mythology, midnight ghosts, etc. It is not by chance that one (French) conversation book about Róheim's *anthropologie onirique* (Dadoun, Mettra 1977) bears the title *Beyond the Gates of the Dream*.

It is a less known fact that the father of ethno-psychiatric anthropology, Georges Devereux (1908–1985), was also born in Hungary.<sup>6</sup> During his long fieldwork among the Hopi and Mohave Indians, and among the Sedang Mói in Vietnam, he collected dream narratives. He used dream analysis for actual psychotherapy (see, e.g., Devereux 1951, also in later re-editions), but I find his later works, e.g., on ancient Greek dreams (Devereux 1975, and especially 1976) more intriguing.

Arthur Koestler (1905–1983) never hid his Hungarian background. In his 'second' creative period, i.e. the 'scholarly' one, he not only used dreams as metaphors (see his famous book, the *Sleepwalkers*, on cosmology), but he wrote extensively on the importance of non-conscious processes in learning and creativity.

Now, I do not have the opportunity to describe any of the 'dream interpretations' by the above-mentioned three persons, but I want to point out the common traces in their oniologies. It will be a noble task for coming Hungarian dream studies to deal with that topic.

Of course, the essay on dreams by Georg von Gaal, living a century before them, cannot be compared with the achievements of Róheim, Devereux or Koestler. But we can surely name Gaal as the forerunner of modern oniology in Hungary. The epigraph from both of his papers is proof of that.

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<sup>6</sup> His original family name was Dobó. He could fluently speak Hungarian until the very end of his life, and I have conducted an interview with him, of course, in our common Hungarian language.

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