



**HAL**  
open science

# The Dream and the Sin. Erotic Dream in the France of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.

Juliette Lancel

► **To cite this version:**

Juliette Lancel. The Dream and the Sin. Erotic Dream in the France of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries.. Framing premodern desires: sexual ideas, attitudes, and practices in Europe., 2017. hal-01831660

**HAL Id: hal-01831660**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01831660>**

Submitted on 6 Jul 2018

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

**THE DREAM AND THE SIN.**  
**EROTIC DREAM**  
**IN THE FRANCE OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES**

Juliette Lancel

***Introduction***

Is dreaming a sin? What does God think of our dreams? The sexual dream<sup>[1]</sup>, which is characterised by erotic contents and may come along with nocturnal emissions, crystallises the numerous questions emerging from the relationship to the dream in the France of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. At this time, the oneiromancy, which is the art of divination by the interpretation of dreams, spreads primarily through books of dreams. These are small treatises, giving indications on the essence of dreams, explaining how they emerge and how to acknowledge prophetic dreams and to make them happen. These books of dreams include also a series of interpretations, arranged by thematic or alphabetical order. This constitutes a distinct genre, present since the ancient times and self-perpetuating, where each author borrows from previous authors. There is in France, several types of dreambooks: scholarly works, mostly in latin, and some light works intended to a broader audience which may include the uneducated masses. Books for the common man belong mostly to the *Bibliothèque bleue* (Blue library), a format born in the early XVIIth century after two families of printers, the Oudot and the Garnier who used to recycle knightly stories, tales and other popular works, including dreambooks.

In order to reduce the production costs, they were cheaply printed on small blue covered booklets, hence their name. Similar to the english chapbooks although with less illustrations, they use to account for a large part of the popular book culture. Yet not, it would be risky to consider these books as a typical representation of popular culture of the time, they were books intended for the popular classes. Most of these books weren't even published for this reason in the first place and were recycled earlier works. *Le Palais des curieux* ('Palace of the Curious'), for instance, was a successful dreambook which first edition wasn't intended to be published at the *Bibliothèque bleue*. Its content is even quite scornful against the populace, described as unable to have premonitory dreams.

Furthermore, we don't know how these books were spread. There probably used to be group readings aloud which might have encouraged the oral dissemination of these dreambooks but it may as well have blended with pre-existing oneiromancy practices.

But over the period of time considered, the stance on premonitory dream is evolving. When, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is commonly accepted to be worried after having dreamt of bad news, admitting to believe in one's dreams is getting less and less socially accepted during the century. Most of the treatises proposing interpretations to predict the future play the card of entertainment: interest in dreams is only for fun and should not be considered as a serious matter. Thus, in *Le Palais du Prince du Sommeil* ('The Palace of the Prince of Sleep'), which he publishes in 1667, Célestin de Mirbel offers sophisticated readers, that he calls 'courtiers of the Prince of Sleep', a recreational use, making it even a way to seduce 'the most strict women'<sup>[ii]</sup>. Being lawyer at the Parliament of Paris, and author of law and philosophy works written in latin, he almost apologises in his preface for publishing such a futile work.

It is in this context that fifteen years later, in july 1682, Louis XIV promulgates in Versailles an edict "for the punishment of poisoners, diviners and others". This edict accompanies the police repression following the scandal of the Poisons affair, which involved great names of the French Court. This struggle against superstitions by State and police goes along with a similar struggle from French authors publishing their works at this time and until the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

But this does not prevent the authors of books of dreams, in the foreword as well as in the following text, from maintaining the ambiguity, from using subtle nuances and from quite often keeping the underlying assertion of a predictive capability. It would be difficult to assume that this ancient belief is not lingering undercover.

In the context of this widespread evolution towards a more endogenous explanation of dream, how is considered the erotic dream? Is it a sin, a symbol, a mere physical manifestation? Is the dreamer responsible for his or her dreams? The responsibility, that is the accountability for one's actions, seems *a priori* extraneous to the dream, which is in the time of the sleep, out of reach of the consciousness: that is why the actions of somnambulists are not punished by the French law in the seventeenth century<sup>[iii]</sup>. However, what is not governed by law may be governed, for some authors, by moral responsibility. They assert that one has the ability to influence on one's dreams through diurnal behaviour, which implies moral responsibility for these dreams. As one may act upon the contents of

his/her dreams, there comes a series of duties distinguishing the good dreamer from the bad. In order to specifically deal with the discourse on the erotic dream, this study does not consider dream accounts but focuses on theoretical texts on dreams, from various origins.

### ***I Sexual content in dream interpretation***

According to oneiromancy, the erotic dream is a divine symbol to be deciphered. Thus, it has no moral significance by itself but is only conveying good or bad significances. For the historian of dream, treatises on oneiromancy (named in French 'clé des songes', literally 'dream key') may shed light on the perception of sexuality at a given time.

In 1984, Michel Foucault makes a founding contribution in starting the third volume of his *History of Sexuality, The Care of the Self*, by a first chapter devoted to sexual dreams in Artemidorus Daldianus, a Greek oneirocritic of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, author of *Oneirokritika*, the only treatise on dream interpretation which reached us in its whole. According to Artemidorus, sexual acts seen positively, i.e. in conformity with law and nature, convey positive predictions, while wrong sexual acts are considered as adverse predictions. Using this approach, Foucault succeeds in giving an overview of sexual practices accepted or condemned. Thus, in the dream of a relationship between two men, an older active partner means the dream is positive. If he is younger or poorer, the dream is negative, because it reverses the social hierarchy. The feasibility of applying this interpretation scheme to premodern history is an open question.

During the seventeenth century, the approach to sexual dreams is far less explicit, but may inform on a social system of representations. In *Le Palais des Curieux*, a small treatise published in 1646 and republished numerous times, about fifteen interpretations of sexual contents may be found – more than in other treatises – with a rather allusive description. The author, Marc de Vulson de la Colombière, is a French heraldist, native of Dauphiné and living in Paris. Being keen on history, he is also a prolific writer who publishes books on heraldry, genealogy, divination and oneiromancy.

In this treatise, as was already the case with Artemidorus, the man is the general case and the woman the specific: interpretations specific to women are given when needed. It should be noted that, for a

woman, erotic dreams are always associated to bad omens, except if she dreams of her husband: "To dream of one's husband naked means safety and luck in one's activities'<sup>[lv]</sup>. For men, associations are less accurate and sometimes contradictory. Dreaming of one's wife naked predicts disappointments, but to dream 'to go to bed with a ribald woman signals business safety'<sup>[lv]</sup>). Thus, the virtue of the man's partner does not presage favourable events, even quite the opposite. However, she must be pretty to bring good luck: "To dream to see a beautiful woman means honour and happiness, provided that she is white and good looking; but if she is humpbacked, old, with a wrinkled skin, deformed or with a dark complexion, this will mean shame, repentance and bad luck'<sup>[lvi]</sup>).

These gendered predictions conform to the mental and moral landscape of the authors as well as of the readers, however with an analysis less clear than in Artemidorus. Indeed, the predictions may be contradictory, even from one page to the next, which is a result of the nature of these treatises, made of successive additions where plagiarizing played an important role.

## ***II Can a dream offend God?***

Are we responsible for our dreams? This question is debated because it raises questions about so-called guilty dreams and their nature. That a dream displaying an evil or impure act may come from God seems impossible. Yet the question is important as it goes to the foundations of oneiromancy and of the enigma dream, whose meaning is not literal.

For Célestin de Mirbel, the answer is categorical, one cannot be responsible for his/her dreams: 'I state firstly that in the dreams there is no sin and that one man cannot be guilty of what he does and says during his sleep'<sup>[lvii]</sup>). This sentence takes place at the beginning of a chapter dealing with the topic 'If it is sin to like and study dreams'<sup>[lviii]</sup>. His purpose is to describe the practice of oneiromancy, but in order to do it he must start by demonstrating that dreams cannot be considered, even partly, as sins. This is a sensitive issue as christianism judges not only acts but also thoughts<sup>[lix]</sup>. However, Mirbel quotes Saint-Grégoire, who says that a mind whose judgement is not free cannot be guilty (*'Tunc enim mens rea non fit, quae suo iudicio libera non est'*<sup>[lx]</sup>). The mind was unconscious during sleep, its movements cannot be held against it. Another argument put forward by Mirbel is that no law or sentence have ever been issued to punish dreams. As a matter of fact, the dream is not reprimanded by State, this is the

critical issue in the debate on the witches Sabbath, since depending on whether it is dreamed or factual, the accused would be declared innocent or not according to law<sup>[xi]</sup>.

The author also stresses the usefulness of dreams, which allows to avoid unwanted events in real life ("That if the action produced by the vehemence of dreams is not criminal, much less are the reflections we make on them in order to avoid the accidents of which they threaten us"<sup>[xii]</sup>). Classic biblical examples are then cited to show once again that God uses the *media* of dream to warn his believer against faults or dangers. The study of dreams is not criminal but imperative, as the inverse would mean to neglect divine warnings.

As one might suspect, this argument is used by Mirbel to defuse the attacks which could be launched against his book. If a dream cannot be guilty, it is then more difficult to condemn oneiromancy. Furthermore: the idea of a divine message conveyed by each dream, even when it is extremely disturbing, allows in some way to purify the dreamer, to reassure him/her, in a word to free him/her of the questions attached to an incomprehensible or unacceptable dream. To interpret one's dreams with a reading grid is a way to escape the anxiety which may raise from discovering the creations of one's imagination.

Of course Célestin de Mirbel is not the first to take sides on the possible guilt of the dreamer. Two other examples may be quoted, which conflict with the vision of the *Palace of the Prince of Sleep*: La Mothe Le Vayer and Scipion Dupleix.

In his treatise *Du sommeil et des songes* ("About Sleep and Dreams"), published in 1643, the sceptical philosopher La Mothe Le Vayer opposes to an everyday conception of prophetic dreams. Forced by the biblical examples to accept their existence, he confines himself to remind their extreme rarity, which corresponds, as a matter of fact, to a common view since the early Middle Ages<sup>[xiii]</sup>. He gives several arguments aiming to denounce the illogicality of these means of communication. One of them in particular concerns abominable dreams:

Why should we say, if Caesar dreams, being in Spain, that he commits an abominable incest with his mother, that the Heaven promises him by that the Empire of the Earth? I very well know that she is

the common mother of all men. But it is a weak reason and there is no appearance that such a dirty way of explaining oneself come from Heaven ; as if God could not have told Caesar what he had ordered him without making his imagination criminal.<sup>[xiv]</sup>

The theme of maternal incest, which marked so profoundly the Freudian psychoanalysis, stands in the seventeenth century as one of the worst conceivable crimes. But in the oneirocritic tradition, the mother is linked to earth, to mother country, so that, even in Artemidorus, the dream of maternal incest is considered as positive. La Mothe Le Vayer reminds that, according to Herodotos, Hippias as well as others 'have suffered of these disorders of the imagination'<sup>[xv]</sup>, and that, nevertheless, no one experienced the glory of Caesar, which proves according to him the futility of such a prediction. The dream of incest is thus, for La Mothe Le Vayer, a disruption of the imagination which brings it to being criminal. Although he is not aware of it, the dreamer is polluted by this dream and is to blame through his/her imagination. That the work of God may be the cause of a crime seems inconceivable. La Mothe Le Vayer, however, is very far from being a puritan. He has published, although in a discrete manner, books with an erotic content, not to say wholly obscene<sup>[xvi]</sup>. But, on the one hand, incest has not an ordinary status and, on the other hand, these arguments aim mostly to deconstruct the belief in the premonitory dream without putting him at risk.

Scipion Dupleix, magistrate from Gascogne, became the protégé of the queen Marguerite de Valois and followed her when she came back from exile<sup>[xvii]</sup>. He is a historian but also an author of philosophy and physics books. Scipion Dupleix was, at the end of his career, Historiographer of France and State Councillor. In 1606, when he writes *Les causes de la veille et du sommeil, des songes & de la vie & de la mort* ('The causes of wakefulness and sleep, of dreams and of life and of death'), he is in Paris for just over a year. In his chapter 'If God may be offended by our dreams'<sup>[xviii]</sup>, he chooses a level purely moral and religious. If his treatise addresses oneiromancy theories – numerous passages have been reused in latter treatises on oneiromancy – for him, as he explains it, the true dreams remain an exception:

That if we experience sometimes true dreams, this is only by chance and by dint of dreaming, as a poor archer hits sometimes the target right in the centre through shooting a great many arrows: so that it is much wiser to value them vains as a whole, in order to stray from superstition, that to work ourselves through a too strange search for the truth among this amount of vanity & provide clarity from the obscure confusion of darkness: & nevertheless praise and thank God if sometimes it pleases him to send us revelations during our sleep.<sup>[xix]</sup>

But any dream, being premonitory or not, may have huge implications, insofar as it is part of the battle of good against evil, as well as the waking state.

Since God admonishes us to protect ourselves while sleeping, & that the evil spirits, immortal enemies of mankind do not trap us in vain to make us stumble & succumb to sin, we must believe that undoubtedly God may be offended by our dreams (...)[\[xx\]](#).

The theory of Dupleix is simple. When a man has a dream that flatters one of his vices and derives pleasure from it, he is guilty, just as if he had really sinned. Conversely, dreaming of martyrdom is considered a good deed.

Yet we can offend Him during sleep by the images of the same objects & by the same actions & affections by which we offend him when awake. Thus the miser dreaming that he makes some illicit gain through usury, fraud or otherwise & likes in his imagination to receive this gain, sins against God. The cruel & bloodthirsty man who dreams that he kills his enemy & who relishes in his revenge & bloodshed of his fellow man, seriously offends God. The lewd who is defiled by pollution in a dream imagining he enjoys his dirty loves, & gets from it some carnal pleasure sins similarly against God.[\[xxi\]](#)

The case of nocturnal pollutions is dealt with particular care a step further, these being considered as 'one of the most damnable sins that are committed in a dream'[\[xxii\]](#). Fasting and chaste thoughts are advised to overcome them, even the consumption of... water lilies and lettuce. 'But holy meditations, study, work & fasting tame the flesh more than anything else'[\[xxiii\]](#), adds Dupleix.

This evocation of guilty dreams, in particular sexual, and of the resulting physical effects, directly implicates the responsibility of the dreamer. While in La Mothe Le Vayer the guilty dream is indeed the result of a disorder, it is in Dupleix the consequence of a demonic temptation and of a reprehensible carelessness on the part of the dreamer. This literal conception of the dream, nuanced in Dupleix by the notion of pleasure, places the sleeping mind on a slippery ground. But in both cases, if the mind is responsible for his dreams that can make it criminal, he thereby becomes an active subject, and not the mere receptacle of ideas coming from above.

### ***III Provoking sexual dreams: a catharsis?***



In contrast to thinkers who hold the erotic dream as intrinsically sinful, two anonymous works of the eighteenth century present impure dreams as a mean avoiding to sin in the real life, through directed dream. The directed dream – the term 'lucid dream' only appears in the nineteenth century – is a way to control in one's sleep the dream content so as to direct it according to one's will and to remember it upon awakening. These two works, which greatly differ one from another in nature and in approach, appear to be the only French books advocating the directed dream in this period of time.

*L'art de se rendre heureux par les songes* ("The art of making oneself happy through dreams"), published anonymously in 1747 in Frankfurt, possibly to avoid censorship, is nothing less than a handbook of erotic magic recipes. In a 'Warning' serving as preamble, the publisher gives himself over to a presentation of the author which is supposed to be none other than his uncle, a French chemist died at the venerable age of eighty-six years and who would have requested the publication of this text as a last wish, 'as a gift to mankind'. This addition is not surprising since such a context – most likely – fictional is not uncommon in the eighteenth century and seems to aim in this case at increasing the legitimacy of the work. Although poor and elderly, this scholar would also have retained until his last day a look perpetually cheerful, evidence indeed that its recipes were a success. By making mixtures and applying them appropriately, the reader is supposed to manage to make the dreams that he is promised to, so as to fulfil all his desires. Some allow you to find in dreams fabulous treasures, experience thrilling adventures, have genius or eat delicious meals. But the majority of the book recipes gives priority to 'lascivious dreams', available in multiple scenarios.

For instance, in order to 'dream about sleeping with a woman and receive her favors', the postulant dreamer has to rub the feet, hands, temples and neck every night with this préparation :

Take two ounces of calcined scammony root & Roman chamomile, three ounces of cod bones & turtle scales calcined as well. Mix the lot in five ounces of the fat of a male beaver then add two ounces of blue scammony flower oil picked during the morning the first days of spring. Boil the brew with an ounce of honey and six grams of morning dew harvested on a poppy. You may add to the ointment a sixth part of opium & once poured and sealed in a glass bottle, let it rest under the sun of two long summer months, then store the bottle in a fresh cellar until winter, when you will keep it buried in sand to unearth only once the spring is back. Then you will break the bottle and recover the ointment and put it into a stone jar, ready for your own use. [\[xxiv\]](#)

Some other ointments make it possible 'to dream that you see naked women, & especially a particular woman which you know or whose you saw the portraits', 'to dream that you are at a table with naked women' or even 'to dream that you enjoy a woman on a flowery grass or in a grove or on the edge of a fountain'<sup>[xxv]</sup>. None of these recipes, however, offers the opportunity to engage in these activities with a man. The target audience, as one might expect, is as much masculine as heterosexual, joining thus the majority of erotic or pornographic works of the time.

However, throughout the first part of the book, the author sets up a moral justification. Although man aspires to happiness and that his dissatisfaction generates anxiety, it may nevertheless attempt to make himself happy on this earth, without waiting for Paradise, and without however violating the divine law. On the contrary, the directed dream would be even for the author a way to purge passions from man ('My goal on the contrary is not to flatter them, but to destroy them'<sup>[xxvii]</sup>) and to preserve his innocence in the manner of a catharsis that would prevent the carnal sin in real life. To prevent abuse of misspent youth, the author even claims to have purposely used complex recipes, long and difficult to implement. The ideal according to him would be that these recipes be made by an apothecary who would sell them bottled. He even raises the possibility of creating a dispensary of dreams, where we would choose the dream for our next night.

More realistically, we can presume that the book's interest seems to be some kind of simple reading of recipes as an erotic entertainment, more than their extremely difficult and tedious preparation.

The second book, *L'art de faire des songes* ("The art of making dreams"), is also an anonymous publication, which specifically raises the question of the sexuality of girls. This small text of twelve pages printed in format in-12, probably in France judging by the examination of typographic material, is dated 1750 by the French National Library (BNF) according to the study of the paper. The author addresses, in the form of a letter, perhaps imaginary, a girl to whom he wants to be nice. The lady having told him of her frightening nightmares, he explains what are the dreams, in the manner of an educational presentation. This is also in support of his argument that takes place the initial presentation, the girl being presented as wishing 'always proofs in all that we advance, very far in that from the custom of the sex, which often adopts paradoxes without examination & without proof, of which most men lull their credulity'<sup>[xxviii]</sup>. Better, he proposes her to turn her dreams to her advantage by controlling them through the concentration on an object that is kept in mind until sleep. This

practice focused on concentration is consistent with those developed in the nineteenth century in particular by Hervey de Saint-Denys.

Despite its didacticism, the tone of the letter is gallant and the words are explicit. It's a matter of obtaining happiness through dreams, but above all pleasure. Indeed, directing his dreams is presented as an ideal way to enjoy the pleasures without affecting one's purity or reputation: 'Free from the constraints of the day, at night you would give to all the transports of love, without fear of evil speech from the Public, and even without costing anything to your virtue'<sup>[xxviii]</sup>. In addition, the dream seems even a way to mock her lover: 'What pleasure of constantly tormenting a lover by an inflexible rigor, and fulfilling your wishes in the sweet illusion of sleep, without him being for half in your pleasure, without him being able to boast of his triumph, and even without knowing anything'<sup>[xxix]</sup>.

Beyond the lightness of tone, the dream appears here as a real escape from a society where girls do not have the right to dispose of their bodies. Their reputation of virtue being a guarantee of their value (a French proverb present since the Middle Ages says 'Good repute is better than golden belt'<sup>[xxx]</sup>, thus implying that a young girl's repute is her most precious asset, even more precious than a belt of considerable value), to see the loved one brag about his triumph is a risk absolutely real for the social future of the young woman. It should be noted that daydreaming, dream awakened, is considered in the eighteenth century as a serious threat to adolescent girls, which can lead to nymphomania<sup>[xxxi]</sup>.

Should we see in this call to licentious dream an evocation of masturbation? In *L'harmonie des plaisirs*<sup>[xxxii]</sup>, Alain Corbin studies the strategies developed by mothers and doctors to prevent girls to yield to onanism. The novels which may lead to daydreaming or even some music are forbidden in favour of readings together with healthy and moral activities, such as botany. The girls suspected must be subjected to a constant surveillance, must not be left alone under any circumstances. If need be, their mother may go to bed with them to ensure that they do nothing but sleep. In this context, the lucid dream appears as a solitary pleasure all the more valuable in that it is unnoticeable. Prisoner of her condition in the real world, the girl can find the way through the dream to a form of freedom, if not emancipation.

## *Conclusion*

If the interpretation of premonitory dreams perceives sexual dreams as symbols and nothing more, they are not less significant for the historian who can read there valuable clues for the perception of sexual practices at a given time.

During the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century, the dream is subject to suspicion. Premonitory dreams are associated with superstitions and daydreams with guilty inclinations, even if this rational behaviour coexists with the persistence of a diffuse belief in premonitory dream, still alive in the depths of the French Enlightenment. This theoretical evolution of dream, from a divine and exogenous manifestation towards a purely natural and endogenous phenomenon, entails a restructuring of the relationship of one individual with his/her dreams. For if the impure dream is no longer the symbol to be deciphered of a message from God, how to serenely confront the bizarreness of its fantasy? For the dream has this capacity, as Foucault points out, 'to tell the subject about its inner truth, the truth of its nature (...)'<sup>[xxxiii]</sup>. This new uncertain status of the dream in the eighteenth century is a source of disquiet, which a purely recreational use of erotic dreams fails to fully dispel.

## Sources

Anonymous. ca 1750. *L'Art de faire des songes*.

Anonymous. 1746. *L'art de se rendre heureux par les songes c'est à dire en se procurant telle espèce de songe que l'on puisse désirer conformément à ses inclinations*. Francfort.

Le Moyne de Bienville, Jean-Baptiste. 1771. *La Nymphomanie, ou Traité de la fureur utérine: dans lequel on explique, avec autant de clarté que de méthode, les commencemens & les progrès de cette cruelle maladie, dont on développe les différentes causes*. Amsterdam.

Vulson de La Colombière, Marc de. 1655 (first ed. 1646). *Le Palais des curieux, où l'algèbre et le sort donnent la décision des questions les plus douteuses, et où les songes et les visions nocturnes sont expliquées selon la doctrine des anciens*. Troyes.

Dupleix, Scipion. 1619 (first ed. 1606). *Les causes de la veille, et du sommeil, des songes, & de la vie & de la mort*. Paris.

Mirbel, Célestin de. 1667. *Le Palais du Prince du Sommeil, où est enseignée l'oniromancie autrement l'art de deviner les songes*. Bourges.

La Mothe Le Vayer, François de. 1761 (first ed. 1654). *Du sommeil et des songes*. *Œuvres*. Dresde.

## Bibliography

Andriès, Lise and Bollème, Geneviève. 2003. *La Bibliothèque bleue: La littérature de colportage*. Paris: Laffont.

Andrieu, Bernard. 2006. Quelle épistémologie du corps ? *Corps*. no 1. 13-21.

Boulet-Sautel, Marguerite. 1988. Le rêve et le droit. *Rêver en France au XVIIe siècle*, ed. Jean-Luc Gautier. *Revue des sciences humaines*, n°211, Lille. 115-119.

Cabantous, Alain. 2009. *Histoire de la nuit: Europe occidentale. XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Fayard.

Carroy, Jacqueline. 2012. *Nuits savantes: Une histoire des rêves*. Paris: EHESS.

Corbin, Alain. 2010 (first ed. 2008). *L'harmonie des plaisirs: Les manières de jouir du siècle des Lumières à l'avènement de la sexologie*. Paris: Flammarion.

Dervieux, Françoise. 2007. *Le rêve des Lumières: savoir et suggestion*. Paris.

Dumora-Mabille, Florence. 2005. *L'oeuvre nocturne: songe et représentation au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Honoré Champion.

Elliott, Dyan. 1999. *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Fabre, Daniel. 1996. Rêver. Le mot, la chose, l'histoire, *Terrain. Revue d'ethnologie de l'Europe*, no26. 69-82.

Fine, Gary Alan and Fischer Leighton, Laura. 1993. Nocturnal Omissions: Steps Toward a Sociology of Dreams. *Symbolic Interaction*. no2. 95-104.

Foucault, Michel. 1994. *Dits et écrits: (1980-1988), IV*. Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 1997 (first ed. 1984). *Histoire de la sexualité (Tome 3) - Le souci de soi*. Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, Michel. 2014. *Subjectivité et vérité: Cours au Collège de France*. Paris: Hautes Etudes.

Gantet, Claire. 2010. Le rêve dans l'Allemagne du XVIe siècle. Appropriations médicales et recouvrements confessionnels. *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*. vol. 65. 39-62.

Garnier, Guillaume. 2007. « Le songe n'est que mensonge ». Le discours sur le songe au XVIIIe siècle.

*Sociétés et Représentations*. n°23. 105-124.

Janneret, Michel. 2005. « Envelopper les ordures » ? Erotisme et libertinage au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle ». *Littérature*. n°55. 157-168.

Keskiaho, Jesse. 2015. *Dreams and Visions in the Early Middle Ages. The Reception and Use of Patristic Ideas, 400–900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mandrou, Robert. 1964. *De la culture populaire aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: la Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes*. Paris: Stock.

Pick, Daniel and Roper, Lyndal. 2004. *Dreams and History. The Interpretations of Dreams from Ancient Greece to Moderne Psychoanalysis*. New-York: Brunner-Routledge.

Préaud, Maxime. 1988. Le rêve du Sabbat. *Rêver en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Jean-Luc Gautier. *Revue des sciences humaines*. n°211. Lille. 103-113.

Steinberg, Sylvie. 2010. Quand le silence se fait: bribes de paroles de femmes sur la sexualité au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle. *Clio*. no 31. 79-110.

Stewart, Charles. 2002. Erotic dreams and nightmares from antiquity to the present. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. no 2. 279-309.

Vidal, Fernando. 2006. *Les sciences de l'âme, XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Honoré Champion.

Vigarello, Georges. 2005. *Histoire du corps: De la Renaissance aux Lumières*. Paris: Seuil.

Vigarello, Georges. 2014. *Le sentiment de soi: Histoire de la perception du corps XVI<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Seuil.

---

[i] The terms « erotic dream » and « sexual dream » are used herealong with the same meaning.

[ii] Mirbel 1667, preface.

[iii] Boulet-Sautel 1988, 115-119.

[iv] Vulson de la Colombière 1646, 138 ('Songer de voir mari nud, signifie sûreté & bonheur en ses entreprises').

[v] Vulson de la Colombière 1646, 137 ('coucher avec une paillardé dénote sûreté de ses affaires').

[vi] Vulson de la Colombière 1646, 111 ('Songer de voir une belle femme, dénote honneur & joie, pourvû qu'elle soit blanche & en bon point; que si au contraire l'on songe voir une femme bossue, vieille, ridée, contrefaite & noire, cela dénote honte, repentance & mauvaise fortune').

[vii] Mirbel 1667, I, 48 ('j'establis premieremen que dans les songes il n'y a point de peché, & que l'homme ne peut estre coupable de ce qu'il fait & dit en dormant').

[viii] Mirbel ('Si c'est péché de se plaire & s'arrêter aux songes').

[ix] Matthew 5 : 27-28 : 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'

[x] Mirbel 1666, I, 48 ('Alors, de fait, l'esprit qui n'est pas libre de son jugement ne peut être mis en accusation').

[xi] For more information, read « Le rêve du sabbat » by Maxime Preaud and « Le rêve et le droit » by Marguerite Boulet-Sautel, in *Rêver en France*, op. cit., p. 103-113 and p. 115-119.

[xii] Mirbel 1666, I, 48 ('Que si l'action que produit la vehemence des songes, n'est point criminelle, les reflections le sont bien moins que nous y faisons à dessein d'eviter les accidens, dont ils nous menacent.')

[xiii] Keskiaho 2015, 1-23.

[xiv] La Mothe Le Vayer 1643, II, 35 ('Car pourquoi dirons-nous, si Cesar songe étant en Espagne qu'il commet un inceste abominable avec sa mère, que le Ciel lui promet par là l'Empire de la Terre? Je sai bien qu'elle est la mère commune de tous les hommes. Mais c'est une foible raison, & il n'y a nulle apparence qu'une si sale façon de s'expliquer vienne d'enhaut ; comme si Dieu n'eut pû faire savoir à Cesar ce qu'il avoit ordonné de lui, sans rendre son imagination criminelle.')

[xv] La Mothe Le Vayer 1643, II, 35. This anecdote may be from Scipion Dupleix who quotes it (f.132), stating that it was precisely on the eve of the battle opposing Caesar to Hippias.

[xvi] Janneret 2005, 157-168. I would also like to thank Carin Franzén for her useful indications.

[xvii] Bercé 1988, 123

[xviii] Dupleix 1619, 145 ('Si Dieu peut estre offensé par nos songes').

[xix] Dupleix 1619, 132 ('Que si nous eprouvons aucunesfois des songes veritables, ce n'est que par rencontre & à force de songer, comme un mauvais archer touche quelquesfois au blanc à force de tirer & décocher grand nombre de flèches : de sorte qu'il est beaucoup plus à propos de les estimer tous vains en general, afin de nous eloigner de la superstition, que de nous travailler à une trop curieuse



recherche de la verité parmi tant de vanité& tirer la clarté de l'obscur confusion des tenebres: & neantmoins louer et remercier Dieu si quelquefois il lui plaist de nous envoyer des revelations pendant nostre sommeil.)

[[xx](#)] Dupleix 1619, 147 ('Puis donc que Dieu mesmes nous admoneste de nous garder en dormant, & que les malings esprits, ennemis immortels du genre humain ne nous tendent point des lacqs en vain pour nous faire tresbucher&succomber au peché, il faut croire que sans doubte Dieu peut estre offensé par nos songes (...)).

[[xxi](#)] Dupleix 1619, 147 ('Or nous le pouvons offenser en dormant par les images des mesmes objects & par les mesmes actions & affections par lesquelles nous l'offensons en veillant. En partant l'avare songeant qu'il faict quelque gaing illicite par usure, fraude, ou autrement, & se plait en son imagination à recevoir ce gaing, peche contre Dieu. L'homme cruel & sanguinaire qui songe qu'il tue son ennemy & se delecte en sa vengeance & en l'effusion du sang de son prochain, offense griefvement Dieu. Le paillard qui se souille par polution en songe s'imaginant qu'il jouist de ses sales amours, & en reçoit quelque volupté charnelle peche pareillement contre Dieu.)

[[xxii](#)] Dupleix 1619, 148 ('l'un des plus damnables pechez qui se commettent en songe').

[[xxiii](#)] Dupleix 1619, 148 ('Mais les saintes meditations, l'estude, le travail & le jeune domptent la chair plus que nulle autre chose.')

[[xxiv](#)] *L'art de se rendre heureux par les songes* 1747, 161 ('Prenez deux onces de racine de Scammonée, & de Camomille Romaine calcinées, trois onces d'arrêtes de morrués & d'écailles de tortues aussi calcinées. Mettez le tout dans cinq onces de graisse de Castor mâle, & ajoutez y deux onces d'huile de fleurs de Scammonie bleue ceuillies le matin dans les premiers jours du printemps. Faites bouillir cette composition avec une once de miel & six gramme de rosée recueillie sur la fleur de pavot. Vous pouvez à cet onguent ajouter une sisième partie d'opium & après l'avoir versé dans une bouteille de verre, qu'il faudra ensuite sceller hermétiquement, vous le laisserez exposé au soleil pendant deux grands mois d'été, au bout duquel temps vous serrerez la bouteille dans un caveau frais & vous la laisserez tout l'hiver enfoncée dans du sable, vous l'en retirerez au printemps & vous casserez la bouteille pour en retirer l'onguent que vous garderez dans un pot de grès pour votre usage.')

[[xxv](#)] *L'art de se rendre heureux par les songes* 1747, table of contents ('rêver que l'on voit des femmes toutes nues, & particulièrement telle ou telle femme que l'on connoit, ou dont on a vu les portraits', 'rêver qu'on est à table avec des femmes nues', 'rêver qu'on jouit d'une femme sur un gazon fleuri ou dans un bocage ou sur le bord d'une fontaine').

[[xxvi](#)] *L'art de se rendre heureux par les songes* 1747, 21 ('mon but au contraire n'est pas de les flatter, mais de les détruire').

[[xxvii](#)] *L'art de faire des songes* ca. 1750, 2 ('toujours des preuves dans tout ce que l'on avance, bien éloignée en cela de la coutume du Sexe, qui adopte souvent sans examen & sans preuve des paradoxes, dont la plupart des Hommes bercent leur crédulité.')

[[xxviii](#)] *L'art de faire des songes* ca. 1750, 1 ('Libre des contraintes du jour, vous céderiez pendant la nuit à tous les transports de l'Amour, sans craindre les discours malins du Public, & sans même qu'il en coutât rien à votre vertu.')

[[xxix](#)] *L'art de faire des songes* ca. 1750, 2 ('Quel charme de tourmenter sans cesse un Amant par une rigueur inflexible, & de combler ses vœux dans la douce illusion d'un sommeil, sans qu'il soit de moitié dans vos plaisirs, sans qu'il puisse se flatter de son triomphe, & sans même qu'il en sçache rien.')

[[xxx](#)] Flandrin 1981, 243 ('Bonne renommée vaut mieux que ceinture dorée').

[[xxxi](#)] Read Bienville, *La Nymphomanie ou traité de la fureur utérine*, 1771.

[\[xxxii\]](#) Corbin 2008, 248-302.

[\[xxxiii\]](#) Foucault 2014, 49-76.