



HAL
open science

Introduction

Anne Rouhette

► **To cite this version:**

Anne Rouhette. Introduction. *Dream and Literary Creation in Women's Writings, 18th – 19th Centuries*, dir. Isabelle Hervouet et Anne Rouhette, London, Anthem Press., pp.1-15, 2021. hal-03408474

HAL Id: hal-03408474

<https://hal.science/hal-03408474>

Submitted on 29 Oct 2021

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.

INTRODUCTION

Anne Rouhette (Université Clermont-Auvergne – CELIS)

Literature, particularly the novel, has always had an affinity with dreams. This was already true long before dreaming became a serious object of inquiry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many major works of Western fiction include the narration of one or several dreams. Some consist entirely in the description of a dream, like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), while others supposedly derive from one of their author's actual dreams, as is the case for Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818; 1831).¹ Whether that relation rests on an actual basis or whether it is a fiction invented afterwards matters little;² novelists resort to this trope because it discloses the fact that, like artworks, dreams enable human beings to 'make contact with imagination and with the imaginative element in all consciousness', in Margaret Anne Doody's words (Doody 1996, 407). What you are reading is the creation of a human mind, those dreams seem to say almost explicitly, a suggestion which reflects upon the creative works they belong to and raises the question of their origin. As Ronald R. Thomas writes of the famous dream related in Mary Shelley's Introduction to the 1831 version of *Frankenstein*,

It is as if the telling of this story of authorial origin were the purpose for which the entire text was written – its end as well as its beginning. In a novel that tells a whole series of conflicting dreams of origin, this dream takes its place as the fundamental one and provides an interpretative frame for the others. (Thomas 1990, 9)

In *Frankenstein* as well as in other dream narratives of the types described above, the imaginative act of creation in which the literary work originates is thus figured in a displaced form. This is also the case of course in another, more common type: the narration of a character's dream.

Many fictional characters dream and either they or the narrative voice relate their oneiric experiences. A few examples from the time-period this volume focuses on include Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Roxana* (1724), Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), *Frankenstein*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). In a novel or in another literary form, the relation of a dream is bound to have a meaning within that work, dreams being very rarely gratuitous. While they are usually no longer prophetic in today's literature, they may serve to help the reader understand a character's psychology – in both remote and modern times for instance, intense dreaming is associated with illness.³ A novelist focusing on dreams shows interest in the human psyche since a character's dream reveals a part of that character, 'the soul talking to itself' (Doody 1996, 410). Alternatively, dreams may reveal elements of a secret kept by a character, as when Defoe's *Roxana* has nightmares about the daughter she probably had murdered. But whatever the part played by the dream, it is never fully explained; there is always something elusive about it. It brings the reader back to his or her experience of dreaming, of the inner chaos felt then, and to the elusive part in each human being. Even when the dream is analysed there remains a residue of extraneous details that both characters and readers have to take into account. Of particular concern are the exact words used to relate the dreams, not just the story-line (the plot in novelistic terms): by definition, a person or a character telling about his or her dream puts a mostly non-verbal experience into certain specific words whose choice is anything but arbitrary, as Freud famously showed. In literary

terms, dreams entice readers to move away from the diegesis and turn their attention to the narration itself, as well as towards the elements in the work which do not seem to fit with the others. The critical distance that readers are invited to take from the literary work they are reading is arguably inherent in the oneiric experience, be it in novels or in real life. As Norman Holland explains, '[dreams] start as experiences, but at a certain moment, they become something to be analyzed. It is not enough for us humans just to experience something. We feel we need to know why' (Holland 1993, x). Dreamers in novels often endeavour to 'know why', to find an explanation for their dreams, either by themselves or with the help of another character, a friend or a more or less official dream-interpreter. As Holly Hirst demonstrates in Chapter 5 of this volume, an author like Ann Radcliffe even uses her characters' reaction to their dreams as a means of tackling this key issue of interpretation, describing appropriate practices in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and erroneous ones in *The Italian* (1797). An interpretative act is thus commonly carried out within the diegesis, mirroring that which is implicitly required from the reader: beyond character level, dreams in a novel beg for the reader's interpretation⁴, assigning him or her a hermeneutical task. The critical attention devoted to the character's dream echoes that which the reader must pay to the work as a whole in the act of reading. In both cases, it is a narrative which he or she is invited to interpret.

Two novels from the first half of the eighteenth century open with the relation of a woman's dream, later revealed to be proleptic. In a thinly veiled manner, these dreams herald the career awaiting the soon-to-be-born heroes – for these dreams originate in the protagonists' pregnant mothers. Here is the first paragraph of Daniel Defoe's *Memoirs of Cavalier* (1720):

It may suffice the Reader, without being very inquisitive about my Name, that I was born in the County of SALOP, in the Year 1608; under the Government of what Star I was never Astrologer enough to examine; but the Consequences of my Life may allow me to suppose some extraordinary Influence affected my Birth. If there be anything in Dreams also, my Mother, who was mighty observant that Way, took Minutes, which I have since seen in the first Leaf of her Prayer Book, of several strange Dreams she had while she was with Child of her second Son, which was my self. Once she noted that she dreamed she was carried away by a Regiment of Horse, and delivered in the Fields of a Son, that as soon as it was born had two Wings came out of its Back, and in half an Hour's Time flew away from her: and the very Evening before I was born, she dreamed she was brought to Bed of a Son, and that all the while she was in Labour a Man stood under her Window beating on a Kettle-Drum, which very much discomposed her. (Defoe 2009, 33)

The Cavalier's mother records her dreams carefully; the last two together read like a blueprint for the novel to follow. As Ian Haywood comments, 'Defoe's references to "Stars," "Astrologer," and "Influence" make clear the function of the dream and the basic message is so obvious as to obviate being made explicit: the son will be a soldier and will leave home in search of martial glory' (Haywood 1982, 72). However 'discomposed' she may be, this mother requires no explanation; she needs no help to 're-compose' herself or make sense of her dreams.

Not so thirty years later in Smollett's *Roderick Random* (1748) when Roderick's pregnant mother is so 'discomposed' – the word is Smollett's this time – by a dream, in which 'she was

delivered of a tennis-ball, which the devil [...] struck so forcibly with a racket that it disappeared in an instant' before returning (Smollett 2008, 1), that she and her husband seek out a seer to interpret it: 'their first-born would be a great traveller; [...] he would undergo many dangers and difficulties, and at last return to his native land, where he would flourish with great reputation and happiness' (Smollett 2008, 1). As in Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, the mother's dream turns out to be prophetic and sums up the future of her unborn son, but here, a masculine figure makes sense of the chaotic and apparently senseless feminine dream, imposing order on what seemed incoherent and disconnected, or more accurately, identifying a pattern underneath a random surface. The intervention of a male interpreter in the novel from the 1740s marks a dichotomy between the messiness of the female dream and the female mind which this dream discomposes and the rationality of the male understanding. This corresponds to what Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, in their analysis of the emergence of the modern subject based on dream narratives, describe as 'the gendering of the irrational' (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 1990, 478). Samuel Richardson was largely responsible for this gendering to which Smollett contributed, as the opening of *Roderick Random* makes clear, and which the second half of the century develops and theorizes:

[...] in the century elapsing between Locke and Malthus, authors developed the cultural space opened by dreams in order to determine a new basis for human identity. Essentially opposed to reason, this space was implicitly female. Within its boundaries, however, a virtually infinite number of distinctions would be made, distinctions between race, class, and ethnicity, as well as distinctions of gender. (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 1990, 471)

It is precisely within this time-span, corresponding approximately to what is known as the long eighteenth century, that most contributions in this volume are situated. They all deal with this female ‘cultural space’, more precisely with the articulation between dreaming and female creativity, a connection which the following lines will try to render more explicit.

In the extracts from Defoe and Smollett quoted above, the protagonists’ mothers dream while their fathers do not. As Margaret Anne Doody remarks of the first half of the eighteenth century, ‘[d]reaming is feminine; men are not to be subjected to inner terrors’ (Doody 2004, 72). The ‘discomposition’ sometimes caused by dreams affects female characters like Harriet Byron in *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) – certainly not the hero himself.⁵ Yet in neither Defoe’s nor Smollett’s novels is the pregnant woman’s dream dismissed. It deserves to be recorded in a prayer book or related to a respected masculine figure – the ‘unconquered’ seer is called an ‘attentive sage’ (Smollett 2008, 1) – who takes it seriously. This emphasises the prophetic value of the dreams sent by the two god-like novelists to a woman, the mother-to-be, not to a man, in a deviation from the traditional Biblical dreams both works of fiction covertly or overtly allude to.⁶ Besides, since the two novels are fictional autobiographies, the mothers’ dreams encapsulate not only the lives of their sons, but the very narratives that constitute the novels, all the more so as the paratactical structure of these dreams parallels the loosely connected series of adventures which will befall the heroes in the subsequent pages. Defoe’s and Smollett’s choice of opening their novels with these dream relations draws the reader’s attention to the artistic dimension of their works, for a literary dream differs from a real person’s partly on account of its rhetorical and aesthetic dimension, of the recognition of the *poiesis* its creation involves – a distinction drawn by George Steiner (1983, 14–15) among others, of which Enlightenment authors were well aware (Engel 2003, 46). Thus, in its incipit, *Roderick Random* does more than gender irrationality; like *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, it also

genders creativity. In other, blunter words, the male author's work is the female character's dream.

Yet Defoe and Smollett both quickly dispose of their heroes' mothers. If she is the first parent mentioned in *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, the mother receives very little further attention and disappears behind her husband. Even her love for her son seems but a consequence of his, mentioned first: 'he [my father...] most passionately loved me' is as it were taken up in the following paragraph with 'My Mother, who lived in a perfect Union with him, both in Desires and Affection, received me very passionately' (Defoe 2009, 34). Furthermore, the echo sounds weaker, as his 'most passionately' is slightly toned down to her 'very passionately'. She then fades away from the narrative, in the first few pages of which the father figures prominently. In *Roderick Random* too the mother soon vanishes, this time by dying a few days after giving birth to Roderick, while the father figure, presumed dead, returns spectacularly at the end of the novel. The female characters have dreamt and delivered both son and narrative pattern: these ghostly figures have fulfilled their function – their essential, their fundamental function of sending their literal and metaphorical progenies, hero and narrative, into the world – and they are no longer needed, as though the link between femininity and creativity, more specifically with fiction-writing, was both acknowledged and repressed at the same time. As has been convincingly argued by Anne Mellor in particular, the plot of *Frankenstein*, of Mary Shelley's 'hideous progeny' (Shelley 2012, 169), relies greatly on this tension which the present volume aims at exploring: it relates the story of a man who wants to make a baby without a woman, with disastrous consequences. Metaphorically, it dramatizes the impossibility of creation without the feminine, and it does so by way of a dream. As Mellor explains,

The destruction of the female implicit in Frankenstein's usurpation of the natural mode of human reproduction symbolically erupts in his nightmare following the animation of his creature, in which his bride-to-be is transformed in his arms into the corpse of his dead mother. (Mellor 1988, 115)

In this famous passage from *Frankenstein*, dreams, creation and femininity are linked in an inextricable manner which several contributions to this volume, using different approaches, try to unravel.

Some chapters refer to Mary Shelley's dream of March 1815, in which she rubs her dead baby by the fire and it comes back to life – a dream which is a more likely source for *Frankenstein* than the probably made-up one related in the 1831 Introduction to the novel (Moers 2012, 324–25; O'Rourke 1993, 376). Other genuine dreams find their way into this volume. Tricia Ayrton (Chapter 11) studies the link between Emily Brontë's approach to her own dreams on the one hand, and her poems and the oneiric sequence in *Wuthering Heights* on the other; Isabelle Hervouet (Chapter 12) analyses what she calls Charlotte Brontë's 'sister dream' and the traces it left on *Jane Eyre*, while Victor Sage (Chapter 6) briefly looks at the oneiric origin of Walpole's *Otranto* in his discussion of Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* and Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777). As these examples show, authentic dreams are focused on only in the light of their connections with literary works.⁷ It is through the prism of the literary representations of dreams that we wish to explore the diversity of female creativity, mostly but not exclusively in the realm of prose fiction: Debapryia Basu and Tricia Ayrton respectively look at Anne Finch's poetry (Chapter 4) and Emily Brontë's poetry notebooks (Chapter 11).

Even though our approach is clearly gendered since this volume analyses works by female authors, well-known or anonymous, our purpose is not to inquire into the potential existence of a specifically male or female unconscious giving rise to specifically male or female dreams, in other words into the possibly biological nature of dreams. Some authors claim that a woman's dreams are essentially different from a man's,⁸ but if there is indeed a 'common language of women's dreams', as Carol Schreier Rupprecht proposes (Rupprecht 1985), the differences between men's and women's dreams are more often considered to be acquired than innate. 'Cultural influence' thus predominates in Anthony Shafton's survey of the twentieth-century studies on dreams, particularly in the scientific field (Shafton 1995, 297), without discarding the possibility of innate characteristics. He notes for instance that researchers found no differences in dreams dreamt by male and female children below the age of 5 or 7 – there is disagreement as to the exact age. In the years from 7 to 11, studies show that girls experience mostly pleasant dreams, peopled with friendly characters, while boys' dreams are more hostile and aggressive. Regarding adult gender differences, the distinction is twofold (Shafton 1995, 296–97). First it has to do with the objects and settings, more domestic in women's dreams, which include more clothes and ornaments for instance, while men tend to dream of vehicles and the outdoors, among other things. Secondly, women recall more dreams and report more emotions, but here again, the probability is great that they do so because they are culturally conditioned to pay more attention to feelings and to talk more freely about their inner lives.

The female authors studied here were all confronted with this question since they lived in a context which taught them that their minds worked in a specific manner because they were women, especially at the end of a century – the eighteenth – which strove so much to define female 'nature' and rested its ideological biases partly on the assumption that men and women

differed essentially, including in their modes of thought. Men were seen as rational by nature, as Locke explained (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 1990, 468). Supposedly weaker both intellectually and physically, women had been considered long before 1800 as more susceptible to the influence of dreams in particular, which corresponded to the lack of control they were 'naturally' supposed to exert over their self-divisions, inner fears and desires – a prejudice Mary Wollstonecraft famously tried to combat in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Before the Romantic period, few male characters would have been as readily 'discomposed' by a dream as Defoe's and Smollett's heroes' mothers are, unless they were mad or morally corrupt.⁹ Anne Finch, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley and the Brontë sisters, although they lived in different eras, were all subjected to an ideology which reflected back at them the image of woman as an irrational being. They may have appropriated this image in some of their most famous works, occasionally reversing the traditional association of dreams with women (Anne Finch, Clara Reeve, Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë all have men dream) but also even questioning the link between dreams and the irrational. Thus, as Victor Sage explains in Chapter 6, the dreams of Radcliffe's Adeline, by revealing to her what really happened in the past, enable her to become a key witness in the legal proceedings at the end of the novel. In a court of law, perhaps the most masculinely gendered and supposedly one of the most rational fields of human activity, judgment is rendered because of the crucial evidence found in a woman's dream. This suggests that dreams provided female authors with an opportunity of interrogating the gender stereotypes which governed the way the male and the female minds were perceived in their days.

Mary Shelley features largely in this volume because she engaged directly and recurrently with this issue, particularly in *Frankenstein* and in her 1831 Introduction, in which dream appears in all its forms, from a nocturnal nightmare to diurnal reveries. If this volume is

mostly concerned with night-dreams, two chapters also pay attention to day-dreams: Debapryia Basu (Chapter 4) looks at Anne Finch's depiction of reverie as a source of creative energy while Audrey Souchet (Chapter 7) analyses passages from various works by Mary Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft in order to examine what she calls an 'ethical revelation', 'an experience of the self through reverie where women's integrity as individuals is disclosed to them'. Like Antonella Braidà's essay (Chapter 7), Souchet's goes beyond *Frankenstein* to pay attention to other works by Shelley: *Matilda* (1819), *Valperga* (1823) and 'The Dream' (1832), a short story published one year after the revised version of Shelley's first novel. In *Valperga*, Shelley has her two female protagonists discuss the human psyche, which Euthanasia depicts allegorically as a Platonic 'vast cave' (Shelley 2000, 304). 'Consciousness' stands guard at the entrance – it is gendered masculine, like 'Conscience' a few lines below, which sits within. But the topographical metaphor unfolds to include a striking description of what today we would call the unconscious:¹⁰

But beyond all this there is an inner cave, difficult of access, rude, strange, and dangerous. Few visit this, and it is often barren and empty; but sometimes [...] this last recess is decorated with the strongest and most wondrous devices; – stalactites of surpassing beauty, stores of unimagined wealth, and silver sounds, which the dropping water makes, or the circulation of the air, felt among the delicate crystals. But here also find abode owls, and bats, and vipers, and scorpions, and other deadly reptiles. [...] It is hence that bad men receive those excuses for their crimes [...]. This is the habitation of the madman [...]. From thence there is a short path to hell, and the evil spirits pass and repass unreprieved, devising their temptations.

But it is here also that Poetry and Imagination live [...]; and here dwells the sweet reward of all our toil, Content of Mind, who crowned with roses, and bearing a flower-wreathed sceptre, rules, instead of Conscience, those admitted to her happy dominion. (Shelley 2000, 305)

A place of beauty and horror, of madness and creativity, it is presided over by a feminine entity ('*her* happy dominion'), 'Content of Mind'. The human soul is described by Euthanasia to her friend Beatrice in gendered terms, but it is neither a man's nor a woman's; all souls, it is implied, are thus divided into masculine reason and severity – superego-like, Conscience 'bears a whip' in his hand (Shelley 2000, 305) – and feminine irrationality and beauty. Shelley seemingly endorses the gendered stereotypes of her times while quietly demonstrating the inanity of the then prevalent essentialist conceptions since feminine and masculine characteristics are attributed to both men and women.

Furthermore, situated in this 'inner cave', 'Poetry and Imagination', in other words artistic creativity, are also unmistakably gendered feminine. Such an association is explored in the first chapter of this volume, "'Delicate females" and Psychedelic Creation in the Scientific Experiments of Thomas Beddoes and Humphry Davy' by Kimberley Page-Jones. Although she does not deal primarily with dreams, or with women's literary creation for that matter, Page-Jones uses Beddoes's and Davy's scientific experiments to highlight both the importance of air in *Frankenstein* and the scientific basis underlying many of the Romantic period's works, as well as to bring out what she calls 'the sexual and creative power of the female trance'. Her contribution thus casts a direct light on the cultural and scientific background against which many of the works studied in this volume were written, raising issues regarding creativity which are taken up in the other chapters, some of which look

closely at the link between contemporary research on sleep and literary works. The need for an interpretation of the use of literary dreams grounded in the authors' cultural context is particularly stressed by Holly Hirst (Chapter 5), Antonella Braida (Chapter 7) and Anne Nagel (Chapter 10). Hirst looks at the theological basis of Radcliffe's dream narratives, which she sees as acting 'in support of a doctrine of active providence'; Braida traces the contemporary philosophical, medical and cultural influences on Mary Shelley, whose 'works were the result of her exploration of contemporary cultural debates, ranging from the origin of life to medicine and to the natural sciences', while for Nagel, Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë both rely on shifting 'eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dream theories and traditions [which] emphasize the capacity of dreams to evoke affective or emotional intensity' in order to 'heighten emotional intensity and thereby construct ideas of Gothic monstrosity'. Nagel then proceeds to consider these theories and the novels she analyses through the prism of Gilles Deleuze's concept of the affect. Mathilde Giret (Chapter 8) also works from this contextual perspective which she broadens to include modern scientific views of sleep paralysis as she examines real or literary narratives of this phenomenon and considers how Shelley rewrites them in *Frankenstein* and to what effect.

Works by several female authors are analysed in this volume (Anne Finch, Clara Reeve, Frances and Sarah Harriet Burney, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte and Emily Brontë), but it is no wonder that many contributions are devoted partly or exclusively to Mary Shelley, as noted previously. An entire section deals specifically with Shelley's fiction (Part III, 'Dreaming (of) Monsters: Dreams, Creativity and Aesthetics in Mary Shelley's Fiction'), while *Frankenstein* crops up in other chapters. That is because no other novelist of the period perhaps articulated so clearly the question of literary creation with that of dreams in her 1831 Introduction. Taken in itself and even more when read alongside the story of creation in *Frankenstein*, this famous

text provides a gendered vision of creativity which questions the narcissistic enterprise of the creative self, a point which has already been largely addressed by critics (e.g. Berthin 1993; O'Rourke 1995). More specifically, a few lines before narrating in her Introduction the dream in which her novel supposedly originates, Shelley proposes a famous definition of imagination: 'Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded; it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself' (Shelley 2012, 167). This is strongly reminiscent of the way dreams are created, from various 'materials' giving 'form to dark, shapeless substances', bits and pieces put together to form a whole, as in the jigsaw puzzles which Margaret Anne Doody suggestively likens to dreams in the postscript to this volume. Shelley's contention that invention, the artist's creativity, cannot create out of nothing, that it consists in using second-hand material, in 'moulding and fashioning' it (Shelley 2012, 167), demolishes 'the fetish of original genius that begins to dominate authorship in the Romantic period' (Gallagher 2000, 318) thanks at least partly to Percy Shelley. As James O'Rourke comments, Mary Shelley's definition of invention 'is an unequivocal contradiction of one of Percy Shelley's favorite proverbs, the quotation from Tasso that "None merits the name of creator but God and the poet"' (O'Rourke 1995, 371); Christine Berthin (Berthin 1993, 107) explains that this definition also runs counter to Percy Shelley's view, expressed in *A Defence of Poetry*, that 'Poetry is the interpenetration of a divine nature through our own' (Shelley 1979, 504). Mary Shelley is far from Percy's assertions when she writes of her dream that 'supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world' (Shelley 2012, 168); as she condemns Victor's hubristic enterprise, she implicitly casts a doubt over her husband's conception of creativity.

For if Shelley's Introduction and *Frankenstein* both describe a primal scene of creation,¹¹ the two narratives contrast the destructive and egotistical nature of the male character's imaginative activity with the fertile and social essence of the female author's. Mary Shelley defines artistic creation as an act of belonging to a community and of receptiveness, of acceptance, whether it be of others' discourse or of elements foreign to the conscious self. To put it differently, her vision of the creative self is based on fluidity and openness. First, as she explains in her Introduction, Shelley's literary pursuits align her with others, with her parents – she is, after all, 'the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity' (Shelley 2012, 165) – and her soon-to-be husband, who encouraged her to write, and the inspiration for *Frankenstein* came to her as she was spending time in Switzerland with a circle of friends. This stands in sharp contrast to Victor's isolation both at the time of his scientific discovery – he is far from his family circle in Ingolstadt – and when he is immersed in his creative act. As he works on his Creature, Shelley's character has become estranged from his friends and relatives, to whom he has stopped writing (Shelley 2012, 35), a seclusion heightened by the situation of his laboratory at the top of a tower, 'separated from all the other apartments' not only 'by a gallery' but also by a 'staircase' (Shelley 2012, 34, emphasis mine). Furthermore, as Shelley describes it in her Introduction, the conversation of her friends, to which she was 'a devout but nearly silent listener' (Shelley 2012, 168), planted the seeds for her dream. 'Le moi créateur est le réceptacle d'idées disséminées qui germinent une fois rassemblées dans la matrice passive' (The creative self is the receptacle of disseminated ideas which germinate once gathered in the passive matrix), Christine Berthin argues (Berthin 1993, 104), resorting to a reproductive metaphor ('matrix') which Shelley herself invited when she called her novel her 'hideous progeny' (Shelley 2012, 169). It is not simply the maternal metaphor and the association between femininity and creation, already found in Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier* and Smollett's *Roderick Random*, that thus play out in *Frankenstein's* birth myth: the

nameless and ghostly mothers of the earlier novels – at least, unlike Victor Frankenstein, Defoe and Smollett’s narrators acknowledge the part played by the feminine in creation, albeit grudgingly – return with a vengeance in Shelley’s Introduction. Shelley develops this metaphor by insisting not only on her passivity as a receiver/receptacle, but on her receptiveness, her willingness to let herself be fecundated by the idea, welcoming it, nurturing it (‘moulding and fashioning’). By doing so she portrays herself as open to influences, as belonging a literary and cultural lineage in which she takes her place as she does within her family and friends.

The female authors studied here were receptive to many forms of influences. They did not create in isolation and took part, at least to some extent, in a line which their handling of the dream motif helps trace; many chapters are concerned with what might be called a genealogy of dreams. The first part of this volume, ‘Women and Dreams: An Oneiric Feminine Literary Tradition’, deals with a more specifically feminine heritage, what Audrey Suchet (Chapter 3) calls ‘the passing on of dreams’ from mother (Wollstonecraft) to daughter (Shelley), which can be extended to literary forebearers. Lucy-Anne Katgely (Chapter 2) thus looks at the tradition derived from Frances Burney, more specifically from the heroine’s nightmare in Burney’s *Camilla* (1796), to argue that in the two novels she analyses, and probably in many more, ‘the *topos* of the dream is a site of resistance where women’s voices fight repression through the questioning of genres and writing practice’. In the rest of the volume, some contributors go beyond the feminine and the literary realms as the works studied register the influence of eighteenth and nineteenth-century artists and thinkers (William Godwin, Percy Shelley, Kant, Schiller), or enter into a dialogue with classical authors like Ovid, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, or contemporary ones, for instance Pope for Anne Finch, Erasmus Darwin or M. G. Lewis for Mary Shelley according to Fabien Desset (Chapter 9).

Developing a notion already brought up by Mathilde Giret, Desset shifts the focus to the intermedial field; analysing Shelley's *Frankenstein* and 1831 Introduction vis-à-vis the various versions of Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare*, he shows that 'certain motifs borrowed from the paintings can actually be found [...] in the novel and its paratext, notably in the 1831 "Introduction", thus playing an important part in Mary Shelley's creative process and narration'. Oneiric paradigms are traced from one author to another: Fabien Desset studies bedside scenes from Lewis to Shelley, Anne Nagel examines the transmission of a dream pattern, which she calls the 'tandem dream sequence', from Walter Scott to Mary Shelley and Emily Brontë, and Victor Sage looks at a triple dream structure from Clara Reeve to Ann Radcliffe. More generally, the role of dreams as structural devices come to light: for Tricia Ayrton for example, 'Dream is used by Brontë [in *Wuthering Heights*] to lend a subtle structure to the over-arching transcendent narrative – and to emphasize Catherine's imaginative capacity to move within time and space'.

The receptiveness described by Shelley in her Introduction extends beyond influence or attention to the conversation of friends and family. It involves something other, something foreign to and escaping the control of the conscious self, something potentially monstrous which surfaces in dreams, at night, in a dark room with 'closed shutters' and only a glimmer of moonlight (Shelley 2012, 168). The acceptance of that mysterious part of the self, which does not always come easily – Tricia Ayrton describes Emily Brontë's sometimes anguished doubt of her 'capacity to direct her own imagination and dreams, both waking and sleeping' – lies at the source of creation for Anne Finch for instance, whose poetics, as Debapryia Basu explains, 'explores the alien nature of the oneiric mind not only to express female creativity, but also to posit that alienness as a crucial condition for the creative act when attempted by a female agent'. Not everything can be understood or interpreted; at the end of her analysis of a

recurrent oneiric motif in *Jane Eyre* (Chapter 12), Isabelle Hervouet underlines that Jane's dreams can receive no complete explanation. The mystery that remains affects the narrative as '[t]he dream spills out, like a secret, into the diegesis'. This does not mean that we should refrain from interpreting. As Tricia Ayrton argues, in *Wuthering Heights* Emily Brontë 'leaves many questions unanswered, but by using dream she instils possibilities. She gives the reader the opportunity to use their own imagination and to make their own decisions about what did or did not happen'. Exploring the possibilities offered by female dream narratives, trying to interpret them and see what they tell us of female creativity is ultimately what this volume is about.

Works Cited

- Armstrong, Nancy, and Leonard Tennenhouse. 1990. 'The Interior Difference: A Brief Genealogy of Dreams, 1650–1717'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23, no. 4: 458–78.
- Bedetti, Gabriella. 1988. Review of *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* by Annis Pratt; *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-Visions of Jungian Thought* by Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht. *Signs* 13, no. 3: 583–86.
- Berthin, Christine. 1993. 'Insémination et dissémination: *Frankenstein* et l'imagination au féminin'. *XVII-XVIII. Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* 37: 103–18.
- Defoe, Daniel. 2009 (1720). *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. Edited by N. H. Keeble. London: Pickering and Chatto.

- Doody, Margaret Anne. 2004 (1977). 'Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel'. In *The Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, edited by Harold Bloom, 71–111. Philadelphia: Chelsea House.
- . 1996. *The True Story of the Novel*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Engel, Manfred. 2003. 'The Dream in Eighteenth-Century Encyclopaedias'. In *The Dream and the Enlightenment. Le Rêve et les Lumières*, edited by Bernard Dieterle and Manfred Engel, 21–47. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Gallagher, Catherine. 2000. 'A History of the Precedent: Rhetorics of Legitimation in Women's Writing'. *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2: 309–27.
- Garfield, Patricia. 1988. *Women's Bodies, Women's Dreams*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Glance, Jonathan. 1996. "'Beyond the Usual Bounds of Reverie"? Another Look at the Dreams in *Frankenstein*'. *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 7, no. 4: 30–47.
- Haywood, Ian. 1982. 'Dreams in Pregnancy: The Opening of Defoe's *Memoirs of a Cavalier* and Smollett's *Roderick Random*'. *American Notes & Queries* 20.5/6: 71–73.
- Holland, Norman. 1993. 'Foreword'. In *The Dream and the Text: Essays on Literature and Language*, edited by Carol Schreier Rupprecht, ix–xx. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Johnson, Barbara. 1992. 'My Monster/My Self'. *Diacritics* 12: 2–10.
- Lindop, Grevel. 2004. 'Romantic Poetry and the Idea of the Dream'. *The Keats–Shelley Review* 18, no. 1: 20–37.
- Mellor, Anne. 1988. *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*. New York: Methuen.
- Moers Ellen. 2012 (1974). 'Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother'. In *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*, by Mary Shelley, edited by J. Paul Hunter, 317–27. New York and London: Norton.

- O'Rourke, James. 1999. 'The 1831 Introduction and Revisions to *Frankenstein*: Mary Shelley Dictates Her Legacy'. *Studies in Romanticism* 38, no. 3: 365–85.
- Rupprecht, Carol Schreier. 1985. 'The Common Language of Women's Dreams: Colloquy of Mind and Body'. In *Feminist Archetypal Theory: Interdisciplinary Re-visions of Jungian Thought*, edited by Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht, 187–219. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Shafton, Anthony. 1995. *Dream Reader. Contemporary Approaches to the Understanding of Dreams*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Shelley, Mary. 2000 (1823). *Valperga: Or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*. Edited by Michael Rossington. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2012 (1818). *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus*. Edited by J. Paul Hunter. New York and London: Norton.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. 1979. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*. Edited by Donald Reiman and Sharon Powers. New York and London: Norton.
- Smollett, Tobias. 2008 (1748). *The Adventures of Roderick Random*. Edited by Paul-Gabriel Boucé. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Steiner, George. 1983. 'The Historicity of Dreams (Two Questions to Freud)'. *Salmagundi* 61: 6–21.
- Thomas, Ronald R. 1990. *Dreams of Authority. Freud and the Fiction of the Unconscious*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wandless, William. 2003. 'Didactic Dream Transformations and the English Novel of the Enlightenment'. In *The Dream and the Enlightenment. Le Rêve et les Lumières*, edited by Bernard Dieterle and Manfred Engel, 225–41. Paris: Honoré Champion.
- Whyte, Lancelot Law. 1960. *The Unconscious before Freud*. London: Tavistock.

¹ Grevel Lindop mentions several examples of authors composing in their dreams (Rousseau, Swift and Coleridge) and quotes two works inspired by a dream, *Otranto* and a sonnet by Keats (Lindop 2004, 28–29).

² This is probably the case for Mary Shelley's famous 'Introduction' to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, which will play an important part in many of the chapters of the present volume. Critics are divided as to the veracity of Shelley's account; James O'Rourke thus writes that 'the 1831 Introduction deliberately constructs an accompanying fable' to the novel, for instance (1999, 367; see also Glance 1996, 8–9). On Mary Shelley's knowledge of the dream theories of her days, see Glance 1996 and several contributions to this volume, among which Antonella Braidà's (Chapter 7), Mathilde Giret's (Chapter 8) and Anne Nagel's (Chapter 10).

³ Anne Nagel develops this point at greater length in Chapter 10.

⁴ On this question, and more generally on the role played by dreams in novels, see Doody 1996, 405–20.

⁵ *Sir Charles Grandison* provides the starting point for Doody's famous analysis of dreams in eighteenth-century fiction.

⁶ The Cavalier's mother writes down her dreams in a prayer book; the prophet Daniel is a discreet but recurrent figure in *Roderick Random*. The epic *topos* of the dream-vision, with or without a prophetic intent, so common in Biblical and medieval narratives, is surprisingly recurrent in novels written in the eighteenth century, an era supposedly turned towards the 'enlightenment' of the daytime and discarding the fallacies of the imagination. Defoe's use of this trope is to be expected, given his background, but it is far more surprising to find it in *Roderick Random*, whose preface dismisses anything to do with 'romance', the 'supernatural' or 'necromancy' – all these terms are synonyms.

⁷ This is less clear in *Otranto* than in *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre*, but Victor Sage underlines the 'dream logic' that the novel follows, reminiscent of its oneiric source (see Chapter 6).

⁸ This is the case of the 'feminist archetypalist [who] mines dreams, fantasies, memories, associations, verbal and visual images, stories, songs, rituals, myths, and philosophies for the original feminine. By identifying patterns specific to women's imaginative experience – patterns that are enmeshed in history [...] – she cuts through culturally acquired qualities to find woman's inherited potential', Gabriella Bedetti explains (Bedetti 1988, 583). From a different perspective, Patricia Garfield privileges a biological approach and explains that the evolution of a woman's dreaming can be due to hormonal changes (Garfield 1988).

⁹ A good example would of course be Lovelace in *Clarissa* (Doody 2004, 72).

¹⁰ It would not be completely anachronistic to talk of the 'unconscious' in a volume dealing largely with the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century since the word was then in usage – occasional, if not common: '[t]he word "unconscious" as an adjective (with the same meaning) appears in English in 1751, and more frequently after 1800, for example, in the writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge. By 1850 both adjective and noun were extensively used in Germany, and were moderately common in England' (Whyte 1960, 66).

¹¹ This aspect has been analysed in particular by Barbara Johnson in 'My Monster/My Self', in which she develops the common points between Shelley's narrative in her Introduction and Victor's discovery and his fashioning of his creature (Johnson 1992, 7).