

**MEDIEVAL DREAMS, HALLUCINATIONS, AND PHANTASMATA:
BETWEEN PERCEPTION AND COGNITION
(A SEMINAR)**



Call for papers

*«Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte,
fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt.»*

In his commentary on the five books of Genesis, while classifying the types of visionary experience, Augustine places dreams in the middle category, ‘visio spiritualis’, between the purely ‘corporeal’ vision of the eye (‘visio corporalis’) and the purely intellectual vision of the mind (‘visio intellectualis’). Augustine’s epistemological model speaks to the ‘middleness’ of dreams: the instability of their position between the embodied and the bodiless, between sensory experiences and knowledge, perception and cognition, as well as truth and falsehood, reality and fiction, things and their likenesses (‘simulacra’). Dreams’ ambiguity has long fascinated theorists and practitioners alike. In antique and medieval literature, a dream framework often serves as a means of going beyond the literal sense of the text (towards the allegorical) and creating a multilayered, fractal-like, structure (such as a ‘dream within a dream’ scenario) that spirals further and further down the rabbit hole of fiction, only to eventually break the fourth wall between the poet and their audience by highlighting the ‘real’ poet or ‘real’ circumstances behind the multiple poetic personae and fictional events of overlapping narratives.

Dreams are also profoundly transformative both in their content and function. Dream content may facilitate narratological, developmental, or emotional transitions, or reveal distorted versions of familiar real-world phenomena (by way of assonance, visual distortion, and so on) — as in the *unruhigen Träumen* (uneasy dreams) of Kafka’s lyric protagonist Gregor that serve to foreshadow a very ‘real’ and traumatic bodily *Verwandlung*. As shown in modern neurobiological studies, the onset of dreaming itself is a highly complex process of transformation and transition, in which ‘wake-like and sleep-like EEG patterns coexist in different cerebral areas during the falling-asleep process’ and produce ‘paradoxical events’ such as hypnagogic hallucinations.

Given dreams’ conceptual elusiveness and transitional/transformational potential, this seminar aims to foster an equally expansive and multilayered dialogue between researchers of philosophy,

theology, medicine, psychoanalysis, visual arts, literature, music, and other fields segregated by modern university structures. While the main focus of the seminar is on dreams, not visions, we do not exclude discussions of dream-adjacent phenomena, including the array of visual and auditory hallucinations and apparitions that occur in transitional states between wakefulness and slumber.

Submissions are welcome on any topic related to late antique and medieval discourses on dreams, including the theories and insights of later periods, as long as they shed some light, or show some relevance for, medieval dreaming. We particularly encourage papers that cover:

- The senses and the intersensoriality of dream content
- Dreams as a means of perception and cognition, as forms of knowledge or deception, and/or their relationship to medieval epistemologies.
- The specifics of ‘dream mentation’ and dream presentation (e.g., in the manuscripts) in the Middle Ages.

Other suggestions include, but are by no means limited to:

- Dreams and the imagination.
- Dreams as texts: what kind of text is a medieval dream? What kinds of information do they provide and omit? In which traditions are they embedded?
- Dreams and their relationship to the dreamer, e.g. the dreamer’s perceived moral character or psychic, spiritual, or corporeal state.
- Dreaming and affect or the history of emotion.
- Dreams and metaphors, especially spatial metaphors.
- Dreams and/as allegories.
- Dreams and psychoses; dreams and madness; insomnia and parasomnias.
- The iconography of dreams in medieval manuscripts.
- Dreams about music; music about dreaming.

In choosing the topic, one can — and should be allowed and encouraged to — dream!

Abstracts of between 200 and 250 words, accompanied by a short (max 50-word) bio can be sent to mikhail.lopatin@musik.uu.se and meghan.quinlan@musik.uu.se.

Deadline for submissions: Wednesday 21 December, 2022

Date and location: Wednesday & Thursday 12-13 April, 2023; Uppsala University (Sweden)

The organising committee: Dr Mikhail Lopatin (Uppsala University, Department of Musicology); Dr Meghan Quinlan (Uppsala University, Department of Musicology)

Format: primarily in-person, but online participation is possible; travel expenses and accommodation are reimbursed

Opening lecture: Prof. Steven Kruger (CUNY)