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Valerio Cappozzo's Medieval Dream Dictionary

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The Italian Studies and the Medieval Studies programs welcomed the return of Valerio Cappozzo to present his just release book, *Dizionario dei sogni nel medioevo: Il Somniale Danielis in manoscritti letterari* (Dream Dictionary of the Middle Ages: the *Somniale Danielis* in literary manuscripts). Dr Cappozzo directs the Italian Language program at The University of Mississippi. He had presented the early results of his work during a visit to UConn in 2007. Although passionate about how dream symbolism relates to literature, he joked that his project had been such a long time coming that it had “become a real nightmare” for him.

Cappozzo discussed the significance of dreams and how the interpretation of symbols found in dreams can be applied to literature to make sense of an author's intentions. We know people have been interpreting dreams since at least the beginning of representation and in that history, there is a remarkable coherence between dream interpretations and dreamed symbol archetypes. He used “tooth” as an example for a dream symbol: between 1220 BC Egypt and today, losing a tooth has been consistently viewed as a bad omen, most often as a premonition of death. He notes that the desire to find meanings in dreams was as manifest in the Middle Ages as it is now, though the frameworks for exploring this has changed profoundly due to vast transformation in culture, science, and religion since then. That dreams retain a certain symbolic consistency over time despite that change is one reason we keep returning to them.

In his talk Dr Cappozzo focused on the dream symbols found in the *Somniale Danielis*, “the Dreams of Daniel”, a book of symbols used by Daniel in the Book of Daniel to interpret dreams he believed to be prophetic. He then went on to an analysis of the dream symbols in the *Divina Commedia* a work in which dreams are used systematically to foreshadow events later in the cycle.

Prof Cappozzo said that there is a disconnect between dreams and reality that makes it difficult to establish simple equations between them the link between the one and the other. While dreams can recall fragments of reality, they do so following an unconscious logic of their own. In the original manuscript of *Somniale Danielis*, the complexity of dreams is reduced to a series of symbolic structures in order to make their potential meanings more available. Dr Cappozzo concluded with a quote from *Cinderella* to encapsulate one of the reasons he believes we keep searching for their meaning: “A dream is a wish your heart makes.”

by Olivia Merchen

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