



## Dizionario dei sogni nel Medioevo. Il 'Somniale Danielis' in manoscritti letterari

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## Book Review

**Dizionario dei sogni nel Medioevo. Il ‘Somniare Danielis’ in manoscritti letterari.** By VALERIO CAPPOZZO. Pp. XII+ 402 pp. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2018.

The *Somniare Danielis* is a manual of oneiric symbols arranged in alphabetical order, attributed to the Biblical prophet Daniel. It was written in Greek around the fourth century AD and translated into Latin in the ninth century. In the Middle Ages, it became the most widespread book on dream interpretation. Valerio Cappozzo's volume features the *Dizionario dei sogni*, a dictionary of medieval oneiric symbols of 650 entries based on the Latin and Italian manuscripts of the *Somniare Danielis* dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. The *Dizionario* also includes variants deriving from the earlier printed versions of the *Somniare* in Latin and in the vernacular.

Following a brief foreword, the volume begins with an ample introductory chapter entitled “Il reale nel Medioevo” (1–64). Here, Cappozzo competently reconstructs the relationship between the *Somniare Danielis* and the classical and medieval oneirocritical tradition. The latter distinguishes misleading dreams from the truthful ones, which are useful for understanding reality, and describes those caused by certain physical states of the dreamer or related to particular astrological conditions. Cappozzo cites fundamental texts such as the *Onirocriticon* by Artemidorus Daldianus, the *Commentarius* by Calcidius to the *Timaeus* by Plato, the *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* by Macrobius, and the *Oneirocriticon* by the pseudo-Achmet Ibn Sîrîn, translated from Greek into Latin by Leo Tuscus in 1176 and influenced by the Indian, Persian, and Egyptian divinatory traditions. The first analyzed codex (22–34) is the MS 859 of the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence (fifteenth century), a miscellaneous collection entirely dedicated to dream interpretation that is crucial to situate the *Somniare Danielis* within the complex cultural system of medieval oneiromancy. It also shows its links with Greek philosophy, Arabic-Islamic and Christian reflections on the subject, and with astrology and medicine. The codex, introduced by an excerpt from Albertus Magnus's *De fato*, includes an early Latin version of the *Somniare* with 311 entries (R1), preceded by Leo Tuscus's aforementioned Latin translation and followed by two chapters of Albohazen Haly's *De iudiciis astrorum*, where the Tunisian astrologist elaborates on visions coming from God and on the astral influxes on dreams. Later on, we find quotations and excerpts by Catherine of Siena, Gregorius Magnus, Michael Scot, and Thomas Aquinas, and oneiric-themed Biblical passages, including the Prophet Daniel's interpretation of Nabuchodonosor's dream that gives the *Somniare* its title. We then find a vernacular Italian version of the *Somniare* composed of 191 entries (Ri), which is not a translation of the preceding Latin one, but comes from a different text, closer to the fragment of another Latin *Somniare*, made of only four entries, which concludes the manuscript.

In his accurate investigation, enriched by images from of the analyzed manuscripts, the author presents the tradition of the *Somniare* in vernacular Italian, which had remained unknown until now. The main manuscripts examined by Cappozzo were either not part of the *corpus* of manuscripts that included the *Somniare* or had not been edited or studied in depth. Because of ecclesiastic censorship, which banished prognostic literature, some of these manuscripts lack the incipit attributing the text to the prophet and were thus not recognized as vernacular versions of the *Somniare Danielis*. Cappozzo took into

consideration three Latin codices: the MS Martelli 12 of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence (MI), the MS Ashburnham 1724 of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence (As) and the MS Riccardiano 859 (RI). He also examined the codices of the tradition in vernacular Italian: the MS Laurenziano Martelli 12 (Mi), the MS Laurenziano Tempi 2 (T2), the MS Vaticano Rossiano 947 (Ro), the MS Riccardiano 1258 (R2) and the MS Riccardiano 859 (Ri). These are the eight main manuscripts, written between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, on which Cappelletto grounds the formulation of the entries that assemble the *Dizionario dei sogni*. Within the critical apparatus he included the variants deriving from other Latin codices and one in vernacular, ranging from the ninth century to the fifteenth century, as well as variants deriving from four Latin and vernacular editions printed between 1475 and 1550. Cappelletto's choice is not only relevant because of the substantial contribution he makes to the study of the manuscript tradition and to the interpretation of the *Sommiale*, but because he also demonstrates the strict relationship between the *Sommiale Danielis* and Italian medieval literature. Indeed, the main codices, except for the previously mentioned MS 859 of the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, are literary miscellanea.

These miscellanea also include texts and quotations excerpted from works by Dante, Cecco d'Ascoli, Petrarch and Boccaccio: these authors were acquainted with and relied upon classical and medieval oneirocritical theories. Cappelletto recalls in fact the interpretations of certain oneiric episodes of Dante's *Commedia* and of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, analyzing them through the *Sommiale*, and clarifying their diegetic and prophetic function. For instance, if in the *Dizionario dei sogni*, as reported by the variants in MI, As, RI and Mi, dreaming of an eagle signifies "honour," so in *Purgatorio* IX Dante dreams of being carried away by an eagle. This oneiric event, in line with the *Sommiale Danielis*, foreshadows the honor the pilgrim will receive from his singular journey in Purgatory and then in Paradise, all the way to the *visio Dei*. Cappelletto also highlights the prophetic and cognitive value of the dream included in Dante's sonnet "A ciascun alma presa" and of the texts of the other authors engaged in the poetic exchange with Alighieri. The sonnet is present in the miscellaneous MS Martelli 12 together with the entire *Vita nova*, immediately after the vernacular version of the *Sommiale Danielis*, the latter in turn preceded by some rhymes by Dante and Cavalcanti. Furthermore, the Latin version of the dream manual included in the same codex is copied in the very same quire as the rhymes by Dante and Cavalcanti, while the letter Z of the *Sommiale* is found on the same page on which, by the same hand, other sonnets of the *Vita nova* had been transcribed. In the *Decameron* as well, several episodes are centered on the prophetic and revealing value of dreams. Cappelletto stresses how speaking to a dead person, which in the *Sommiale Danielis* signifies "argument," clarifies the interpretation of the novella of Lisabetta da Messina (IV, 5) and the quarrel between the protagonist and her brothers. In the MS Vaticano Rossiano 947, the scholar Domenico Caronelli transcribed the *Sommiale Danielis* after the *Decameron*, a further proof of how the former could be of help to the reader to understand the oneiric symbology included in the latter. The unquestioned importance of the *Sommiale Danielis* not only in the Middle Ages but also in the Renaissance is testified by Leonardo's prophecies and by the interpretation of a dream that he had in his childhood. The Florentine artist and scientist owned three printed editions of the *Sommiale*, including the Florentine edition by Lorenzo Morgiani and Johannes Petri, circa 1496, used by Cappelletto in the critical apparatus.

The volume includes thorough presentations of the principal codices, the transcriptions of Latin and vernacular versions of the *Sommiale Danielis*, an updated bibliography (65–197), the list of manuscripts and printed texts used in the survey (199–200), and a most useful "Reasoned Index of Oneiric Symbols" (201–211). We then find the *Dizionario dei sogni* itself (213–381), which offers a detailed list of meaning variants for each entry that Cappelletto compiled by comparing the main manuscripts, as well as a

critical apparatus allowing us to reconstruct the history of the oneiric symbols of the *Somniale Danielis* and of their meanings from the ninth century AD until 1550. An ample *Bibliography* and a general *Index* complete the volume.

Cappozzo reconstructs the manuscript tradition of the *Somniale Danielis*, a precious document that considerably contributes both to the reconstruction of the complex oneiric imagery of the Middle Ages, and to the exegesis of the founding texts of the early centuries of Italian literature. Furthermore, Cappozzo stresses the tight relationship between this text and modernity: Freud himself knew the *Somniale Danielis* and was fascinated by Leonardo's dreams and prophecies. Many similarities can also be found between the interpretation of dreams in the *Somniale* and in the *Smorfia Napoletana*, which goes to prove the symbolic continuity between medieval and modern individuals.

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