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## The dream theme and its functions in a literary work

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## Topic: The dream theme and its functions in a literary work.

### 1. Subject's literature

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- 2) Jan Kochanowski, Tren XIX albo Sen, [w:] tegoż, Treny, oprac. J. Pelc, Wrocław 1969, s.38- 48.
- 3) Jan Kochanowski, Do snu, [w:] tegoż, Fraszki, oprac. J. Pelc, Wrocław 1957, s.60.
- 4) William Szekspir, Sen nocy letniej, przeł. K.I. Gałczyński, Kraków 1952.
- 5) Zbigniew Morsztyn, Żywot - sen i cień, [w:] Helikon sarmacki, wybór Andrzej Vincenz, opracowanie Maciej Malicki, Wrocław 1989, s.259 - 260.
- 6) Pedro Calderon de la Barca , życie jest snem, przeł. Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Warszawa 1971.
- 7) Adam Mickiewicz, sc. IV, [w:] Dziady cz. III, Warszawa 1957.
- 8) Bolesław Prus, sen Izabeli o Wokulskim, [w:] Lalka, t I, (Rozdz.VI), opracowanie. Józef Bachórz, Wrocław 1991, s.113.
- 9) Fiodor Dostojewski „Sen Raskolnikowa, [w:] Zbrodnia i kara, (cz. I, Rozdz. V), przełożył Czesław Jastrzębiec-Kozłowski, opracowanie Józef Smaga, Wrocław 1992, s. 67 - 73.
- 10) Bruno Schulz, Sklepy cynamonowe, [w:] tegoż, Opowiadania, oprac. Jerzy Jarzębski, Wrocław 1989, s.57-69.
- 11) Gustaw Herling - Grudziński, Gasnący Antychryst, sen Nietzschego, Raskolnikowa, [w]tegoż, Opowiadania zebrane, Poznań 1990, s.157 - 162.

### 2. Literature

- 1) Władysław Kopaliński, Słownik mitów i tradycji kultury, Warszawa 1985, s. 1053-1054.
- 2) Allardyce Nicoll, Dzieje dramatu, Warszawa 1983, t. I, s. 250 - 251.
- 3) Alberto del Rio, Historia literatury hiszpańskiej ,tom I, Warszawa 1970, s.422-423.
- 4) Słownik literatury polskiej XIX wieku, pod redakcją Józefa Bachorza i Aliny Kowalczykowej, Warszawa 1991, s. 869 - 876.

- 5) Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku, pod redakcją Aliny Brodzkiej, Marioli Puchalskiej i Małgorzaty Semczuk, Warszawa 1992, s. 760 – 762
- 6) Słownik motywów literackich, pod redakcją Barbary Drabarek , Jacka Falkowskiego Izabeli. Rowińskiej, Warszawa 1998, s. 406 - 409.
- 7) Słownik współczesnego języka polskiego, pod redakcją Naukową Bogusława Dunaj. Warszawa 2001, t.I-II, s. 304.

### **3. Framework speech plan**

- 1) Introduction - dictionary meaning of the word.
- 2) Prescient dream, a reflection of man's hunches.
- 3) Dream as a metaphor for death.
- 4) Dream as a compositional theme of a literary work.
- 5) Topos of life as a dream
- 6) Dream as a reflection of the inner experiences of a human being.
- 7) The representation of reality in the manner of a dream
- 8) A dream evoked as a literary allusion.
- 9) Conclusion.

#### **3.1. Introduction**

At the beginning, the concept of "sleep (dream)" should be explained. As most dictionaries state, from the medical point of view, it is a physiological state that allows the body to regenerate its forces, consisting in a temporary loss of consciousness, lowering the body's sensitivity to stimuli.

It is commonly said that a dream can be feverish, deep, peaceful, sound, profound. It can also be interpreted as *what* someone dreams and then we distinguish colorful, prophetic (prescient) or erotic dreams. The word *dream* is also commonly used in many phraseological compounds, which include, among others: deep sleep, to see something like in a dream, last sleep, righteous sleep.

Many of these expressions, phrases, already indicate specific functions that the dream theme will play in literature: a dream appears as a compositional motif of a piece, functions as a metaphor for death, and often it is also a reflection of the human inner being. We know literary prophetic (prescient) dreams, the topos of life as a dream can be recalled, but it also occurs as a literary allusion.

### **3.2. Prescient dream, a reflection of man's hunches**

A dream treated in this way appears in the oldest mythological and biblical texts. It then acquires an allegorical, symbolic meaning that must be discovered so that reality, future fates, accidents and events become clear, recognizable, known and understood.

Such an example is the dream of one of the mythological queens - HEKABE - the wife of the last king of Troy - Priam. Before Hekabe gave birth to her second son, Paris (also known as Alexander), she dreamed that she had given birth to a flaming torch which covered all of Troy with its flames. It was explained that this dream meant that a newborn son would bring disaster to his native city. This son was Paris. Priam gave the child to the shepherd Agelos at birth to be abandoned in the mountains. However, this did not happen. Paris survived, and we know it was for a reason, so the Trojans hated Paris as the perpetrator of the war and despised him for lack of valor.

The dream from Mickiewicz's drama can also be read in a symbolic, prophetic way, as it contains a certain interpretation of the sacrifice, the martyrdom of the Polish nation. One of the dreamers was Eve from the third part of *Forefathers' Eve*. While staying in a country house near Lviv, a young girl prayed for the Polish youth who had been persecuted by tsarism and imprisoned, and she also prayed for the poet whose poems she read. When the girl fell asleep, she had a vision. She saw herself adorned with beautiful flowers in a picture of the Virgin Mary. Mary takes the wreath in her hands and gives it to Jesus who, smiling, showers Eve with flowers. The girl notices that one of the flowers - a rose - is alive and complains that she was "taken from the family grass".

Most likely, there is an allusion to the suffering in prison and the exile of Vilnius youth. However, the girl explains that the rose was plucked not for fun, but to crown the temples of the Mother of God. Therefore, an innocent sacrifice is indispensable, it will bear

fruit, which is confirmed by the symbolic fairy tale of Żegota from scene I, as well as the later vision of Father Piotr.

### **3.3. Dream as a metaphor of death**

In mythology, Hypnos was the brother of the death god Thanatos. The Greeks believed that dream was learning to die. A similar vision is presented in Kochanowski's Trifle II Do snu (To The Sleep/Dream). The first words of this literary work show us this truth. It begins with the apostrophe: "You, oh dream, you teach man to die and show the taste of the age to come." The lyrical ego shows the journey of the soul, which leaves the mortal body, it can then traverse seas and land, and observe the movements of heavenly bodies. Thus, through a dream, the soul learns "what it means to not live".

A similar metaphor of death as a dream is contained in threnody VII, where Kochanowski said that Urszulka fell asleep with a "sound, deep, restless dream". This periphrase shows that a person is afraid to utter final words that take away hope. William Shakespeare also continued this in his Hamlet monologue. Death then becomes a dream that gives comfort, it would be a protection against the evil of the world. According to Hamlet, a man turns out to be a coward and is afraid to cross the barrier of death.

### **3.4. Dream as a compositional motif of a literary work**

In the construction of a literary work, the dream of one of the characters is invoked and it becomes a component of the world of the presented work. In such a function, the dream was used in threnody XIX. Threnody is the end of the cycle and a specific response to the request contained in threnody X, where the lyrical ego asks for consolation and that Urszulka should appear before him in any form.

Threnody XIX begins with an introduction in which the lyrical ego speaks of a dream in which his mother with Ursula in her arms appeared to him. The poet, tired of grief and suffering, falls asleep before dawn. In a dream, his mother comes, who, as a person more experienced than her son, with greater wisdom in life, begins to comfort him. Dream is a kind of comfort for a concerned father and an admonition that directs the poet to adopt a specific attitude towards life, that is, to maintain a balance between the operation of reason and feelings. His mother shows him the way to comfort him, says, among others: "Suffer

human fate ...". Thus, it shows him that human fate should be endured with dignity and that one should believe in divine providence.

One of the elements of the world of the presented work was a dream in William Shakespeare's comedy "A Midsummer Night's Dream". Here, however, the boundaries between what is awake and what remains in the dream realm are consistently blurred. The action seems to be on the verge of reality and dream not only because the characters fall asleep again and again, but also as a result of the actions of the fantasy world.

On this magical night, the difference between the dreams of real characters, their actions and the actions of the elves is blurred, all thanks to the juice of the enchanted flower and Puck's mischief or mistakes. It was Oberon - the king of the elves - who instructed his fool's helper to find a flower called the "sleeping heart": "When you wet someone's sleepy eyes with its juice, this man or woman will immediately fall in love with the first living creature he sees upon awakening."

In this way, Oberon wanted to teach his wife - Queen of Titania, but also to restore the reciprocity of Demetrius to Helena (despised by the young man). Due to mischief, Tytania falls in love with Bottom - an ordinary weaver, who finds himself in the forest dressed as a donkey. The fate of those in love, Lysander and Hermia, also gets complicated. The moment of awakening from sleep becomes a moment of change in love. Later, Oberon tries to correct Puck's mistake, so the subject of Shakespeare's drama consists of constant awakening and falling asleep.

In this drama, the dream certainly has other functions, it plays a different role, but here I will not deal with it. After waking up, the protagonists are not sure whether what they are experiencing is a continuation of dream visions or whether they are experiencing something while awake. Strangely familiar - Calderonian - the formula sounds. At this point, therefore, I will move on to discussing the topos of life as a dream, which made a "dizzying" career in the Baroque era.

### 3.5. The topos of life as a dream

The dream theme appears in the 17th century in philosophy, science, art, and literature. For example, Descartes spoke about it in his *Meditations on the First Philosophy*. In Poland, the theme of perceiving "life" as "dream" is often found in the works of Zbigniew Morsztyn. It is enough to recall his poem "Life - a dream and a shadow". Morsztyn compares human life to a dream, because for him existence is a wandering in the dark ("This life cannot be called by daylight"); in a fog where forms transform faster than a day and people are forgotten.

There is also a medieval motif „ubi sunt" („Where are they?") in the poem. Morsztyn asks: "Where are the kings, where are the brave princes, / where are the chief troops, / whose the earlier years remembered?" The poet also introduced the topos of life - theater. For him, life also seems to be a journey towards death, playing roles that nobody remembers afterwards. He calls them (dead kings, princes and chiefs) shadows, masks of which nothing but scant shadow is left. The motifs used by Morsztyn - topoi emphasize the transience, fragility of human life, the unknowability of the truth about the world, the penetration of dream and death.

However, the most famous realization of life-dream is Calderon's philosophical drama "Life is a dream." The plot of this, perhaps the most widely commented (next to *Don Quixote* Cervantes) piece of Spanish literature, takes place, surprisingly, in ... Poland. In this work of literature dealing with the problem of human freedom and knowledge of the world, the ruler Basilio ordered his little son Sigismund to be imprisoned in a tower standing in the wasteland. He did so because he believed the horoscopes that said his son would be a monster.

When Sigismund grew up, the king put him to the test: in a dream, he transferred the prince to a palace and made him ruler. Zygmunt, thinking that "it was only a prediction, behaved in accordance with the prophecies" (after all, everything is allowed in a dream). Basilio's dream did not come true that "heaven, convinced by his son's virtue, would cancel what it had once said". During his one-day rule, Sigismund threw a servant out of the window and sentenced his faithful teacher Clotaldo to death.

Asleep again and transferred to the tower, he no longer knew what was reality and what was dream. Despite this, the hero managed to break free and overcome the curse of fate. Released, he knows what he has lost, so he decides to accept a new life; accepts responsibility for his fate - he takes over the rule of the state. Sigismund is a hero who learns through his own suffering.

He masters his instincts, the bad tendencies that led him to be placed in the tower. He makes an extremely important decision and begins to act morally and correctly.

By introducing the dream theme into a literary work, Calderon asks perhaps the most important eternal questions about man: what is life? What is reality? In the face of death, the passing of everything and all kinds of limitations, what is the extent of human freedom? This content is recalled in the words of Sigismund from his famous monologue: "we will fall asleep / after all, life is a dream / only a dream and he who lives and dreams himself will not dream himself (...)", "what is life / a madman's dream / an act of the mind / what is the life / shadow / let's be satisfied with ourselves / on this small and warm / life is a dream / entire / and all our dreams are a dream".

### **3.6. Dream as a reflection of the inner experiences of a human being**

The theme of dream as a reflection of human inner experiences appeared in the positivist novel "The Doll (Lalka)" by Bolesław Prus. One of the main characters, Izabela, dreams of Wokulski, who emerges in a dream "from the depths of the lake of black smoke and white vapors a man emerges halfway through his figure" with huge red hands. The man subjugated her father, gained his trust, and then won her alone. This dream reflected Izabela's fear of Wokulski, a wealthy and influential man.

A similar meaning of dream was included in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment (Zbrodnia i kara)" The main character, Raskolnikov, is an excellent example of how dream influences the human body and mental state. He turns out to be a personality torn - contrary to declarations - between the reasons of the mind and the reasons of the heart, as evidenced by the dream that haunted him after the decision to kill Alona Ivanovna. It was a reminiscence from childhood, when little Rodion witnessed a cruel horse being killed by a drunk peasant Mikołka.

The dream revealed the truth about the hero as a man whose nature is not inclined to inflict suffering on others. The dream was also a warning against the planned act. After making it, he clearly saw that the authority of reason was being undermined. What he did later became clear to the killer - he also committed crimes against himself in an attempt to uproot moral sensitivity.

### **3.7. The representation of reality in the manner of a dream**

The collection of short stories by the interwar writer Bruno Schulz, "Cinnamon Shops", also refers to the poetics of dream. Schulz processes reality, and therefore uses the mechanisms characteristic of the dreaming process, where the rules of logic and rationality are questioned. Objects, people, buildings can be themselves and not at the same time; metamorphoses take place freely.

Certainly, Schulz is close to the psychoanalysis of Karol Gustaw Jung and the art of the surrealists. At this point, it is worth recalling the title stories from the writer's collection. The main character travels the city to bring his father from home a forgotten wallet with money and important documents. The hero's path through the town resembles a wandering in a maze, the school looks like a mysterious, fairy-tale palace, the sky rolls up like a book, and cinnamon vendors resemble magicians.

Other elements that confirm the dreamlike way of seeing reality include: the moon, which displays all its phases and positions simultaneously; cinnamon stores are houses that have no entrance, only tightly closed windows; the boys sit in the light, soft snow and eat hazelnuts during the spring winter; the living room is devoid of a front wall, and its extension is a city square and the furniture stands directly on the pavement. The horse of the cab driver turns into a small wooden horse made of wood; the air in winter smells like violets; hikers on the hills collect fallen and snow-wet stars. The hero feels in this space like in a maze - lost. Nothing remains certain and unchanging here: neither time nor space. Thanks to this, the reality described by Schulz takes on mythical features. The entire story is devoted to the description of the interpenetration of: the known and strange space, the labyrinthine space, heaven and earth; winters and springs, daydreams and dreams.

### **3.8. Dream evoked as a literary allusion**

An interesting way of such a realization of the dream theme in literature is the short story by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński "The Fading Antichrist". I think that this way of referring to dreams seems characteristic of an essay or essayistic way of shaping a statement, where the reference to dreamlike motives serves not only to color such a statement, but also often becomes a pretext for a broader reflection and introduces new associations.

This is exactly what happens in the aforementioned story by Herling-Grudziński. The writer reconstructs the last days of the conscious existence (before reaching the state of madness) of Friedrich Nietzsche, who in Turin in 1888 prepares the "final attack on Christianity" as a religion that elevates all that is weak, sick and suffering. It is not without reason that Herling-Grudziński tells his protagonist to read about Raskolnikov's dream (the same one that was mentioned earlier). At the same time, the author of "Another World" shows that Nietzsche later repeats the gesture, the behavior from Raskolnikov's dream. Perhaps - just like the hero of Dostoyevsky - he understood that trampling on moral values and the idea of Christianity turns against man.

### **3.9. Conclusions - summary**

As a summary of the whole, it could be stated that:

- -there are no literary genres reserved for the dream theme,
- -moreover, the dream motif has its origins in antiquity, but in earlier epochs it appears rather in an allegorical and symbolic function, it looks into the hero's future,
- -more often, however, it is present in the epochs when the irrational, spiritual element (Romanticism, Baroque, Young Poland) is in the foreground
- - along with the development of psychology (Freud's psychoanalysis), one can rather talk about the poetics of dreams (onirism) and then the dreaming mechanism (Schulz) is inscribed in the world presented in the work,
- -the poetics of sleep appears especially clearly in surrealism and here significant achievements are observed in painting (Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dali- his painting "Dream")

- - it often happens that this theme is used in one piece for various functions. An example is the drama-comedy by W. Shakespeare "Midsummer Night's Dream", where next to a dream woven into a composition of a literary work, we find a prophetic dream and a dream as a metaphor.