

ONEIROGRAFIA - THE WRITING OF DREAMS

Author: Andréa Catrópa

Abstract: Oneirografia is an interactive digital work that proposes a reflection on the role of dreams in our lives. Created from research initiated in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the work began with internet searches on a particular dream. Subsequently, this creative process became an investigation into the atavistic relationships that the human species maintains with dreams and observed the different meanings that this state of mind has acquired throughout our history.

Oneirografia is inspired by dream experiences and allows the user to navigate in a 3D environment. Into this environment, it is possible to receive the message of the oracle, which is a combinatorial poem. In addition, the user can make up his e-dreams. Composed of the choices made during navigation, e-dreams mix images, filters, and text. It is possible, from there, to save the formed images or share them.

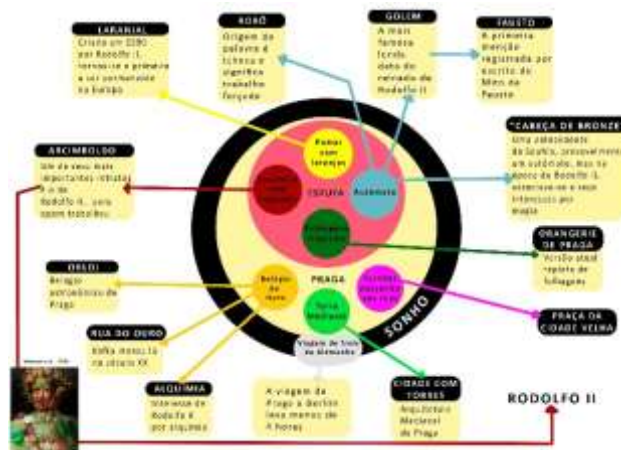
Keywords: Digital literature, e-lit, dreamlike narrative, Oneirografia, dreams

Oneirografia is a work of digital literature whose creation process began almost simultaneously with the arrival of restrictive measures to circulation and socialization due to the pandemic of Covid-19 in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The work was motivated by a dream, and this process started in March 2020, unfolded in bibliographic and iconography research. That same year, the partial results of this research were presented at some national and international academic congresses and I've published an article on this subject [1].

In the first phase of the project, the research focused on a search for correspondence between the dream that motivated them and their possible connections to the waking world. Since the night experience had as a scenario a certain geographical locality, the city of Prague, and this was unknown to the dreamer, the first resource used for this verification was the internet search algorithms. Thus, correlates were sought between the dreamed city and its physical configuration. Due to the impossibility of traveling to do on-the-spot research, either by restrictions caused by the spread of coronavirus, or by high costs and travel distance between South and Central Europe, the Internet has proved to be a viable resource for research.

The initial verification was based on a translation of the dreamlike images into the natural language which, in turn, was used to trigger the search mechanisms. These mechanisms translate into code the typed letters, submitting to the performance optimization processes of the search algorithms the semantic structures filtered from the dream by consciousness, which attempts to organize rationally the dreamlike deviations that flee from the logic of the facts observed in daylight.

The path described was followed by the creation of a dream map, which was not intended for aesthetic fruition, but only for the dream record for future reflections and consultations, as its details were erased from memory over time. In some ways, too, the map intertwines an imponderable and intimate experience to how seekers define the city of Prague through its monuments, its buildings, and its historical characters for the virtual tourist.



The dream images were thus transformed into a verbal simplification, used as an input to generate outputs such as museum sites, Wikipedia entries, official and amateur photographs of monuments and the most visited places in Prague, pages with tourist information, recommendations of bars, shops, markets, cafes, restaurants and hotels in the city (with their respective user reviews), maps and virtual representations of the environments via Google Street View.

These data gathered both the contributions of residents, as well as information shared by visitors, all filtered by the algorithms and customized according to the researcher's profile information since this calibration by user profile is a common practice of internet searchers. In this way, it can be said that the dream map points to an imaginary city, created by the conjunction of collective inputs, algorithmic tracking, and the personal element of reworking the dream experience.

The elaboration of the dream map allowed the research, from then on, to revolve around the terms that signaled a consensus on the world of dreams and the verification, by algorithmic mediation, of facts and particularities virtually accessible concerning the city of Prague. However, even though the result of this research method has been fruitful and has raised material for theoretical reflection and artistic creation, since the beginning of 2021, we have opted for a path different from what has been followed so far.

The perception that the pandemic did not cool down and kept a large part of the world population in a state of exception due to the growing health, economic and social problems contributed to the questioning of the validity of creating a work aimed at a particular experience. Somehow, the coronavirus, its transmissibility, and its lethality put into question some values that define the daily lives of most citizens living in western metropolises, such as narcissism and exacerbated individualism. The possibility of falling ill, of losing one's own life or loved ones due to a virus that travels through the air, from one body to another, emphasizes human vulnerability, reminding us of the animal contingency of depending on a body whose functioning lasts for a finite time.

We are virtual beings, if we wish, only to the extent that our bodies live. But before that, we are mortal and this fact cannot be controlled only with willpower, regular exercise, and healthy eating. We are aware of social inequalities and their effects even more perverse in this pandemic. Even so, even though they are less susceptible to complications when they become infected, there are also young people, there are athletes, there are rich people who succumb to the coronavirus. If, when programming smart computers, we dreamed of living in a world purified of human imperfection, we now see, most sadly and harshly, how different we are from machines. This emphasizes our links as a species and made the creative process based on a particular experience less significant than working with the atavistic relationships that we maintain with dreaming.

Scientific studies and different reports, since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, have been focusing on a very noticed phenomenon: the increase in the report of “abnormal dreams” in this long period in which a large part of the world population has experienced unprecedented conditions in their lives. Students from the University of Toronto, for example, developed research in which the result was the report of more vivid dreams between its participants. They’ve also related an increase in the occurrence of nightmares and night episodes that involved amplification of anxiety and, also, a portion of dream narratives that contained references to the particularities experienced by many of us in a pandemic daily life [2].

The dream, which was valued by Western peoples in Antiquity as a way of knowing future events [3], has now come to be understood, increasingly, as the result of individual perceptions and concerns. Freud's psychoanalytic theory of dreaming states that the censorship of the conscious operates even when we're asleep, and the unusual dream language aims to protect us from direct contact with information that, transmitted objectively, we might not be able to bear [4].

Ribeiro [5] proposes a link between the psychoanalytic bias and the scientific approach to dream mechanisms, seeking to establish their atavistic links with the human species. In his book, Ribeiro defines the dream as a probabilistic oracle, in which simulations of past events combine with future expectations in associative narratives, which allow the dreamer to carry out simulations that, in some way, prepare him for life.

If we take into consideration the summary made above about some perceptions about the dream and the growing attention that this everyday phenomenon received from academic researchers during the Covid-19 pandemic, we can ask ourselves about the importance of this activity in our life in the past few months. And how cities and their frenetic pace have influenced our ability to use this ancient tool for our self-knowledge and to reflect on our actions in the world.

The imaginative capability of the dreaming sleeper underwent a relentless erosion, and the vitiated identity of a visionary was left over for a tolerated minority of poets, artists, and mad people. Modernization could not proceed in a world populated with large numbers of individuals who believed in the value or potency of their own internal visions or voices [6].

Some difficulties to resonate with our experiences during sleep come from the lack of habit of saving time, when we wake up, to remember our dreams and share them with

other people. Such difficulty also points to our individualism and the pursuit of productivity and rationality, which distances us from this activity whose ancestral importance has left several marks in human culture.

These reflections determined the new paths of our artistic creation process that resulted in Oneirografia. This work aims to remember and share dreams in a digital environment. For this, it is structured as follows: after choosing one of the languages in which the project is available (Portuguese, Spanish, and English), the user receives a welcome message in the chosen language.



A form automatically appears on the screen in which the user will write something about the dream they want to remember (or create), using any language they prefer, as the three options listed above restrict only the languages in which the navigation instructions are exposed. At this stage, the work is expected to function as a kind of dream diary, in which the user can record his words in up to 300 characters, divided into three fields of 100 characters each. To proceed to the next step, you need to write something, at least one letter, in all fields. The idea is to encourage the user to spend time reflecting and seeking to recover their dream experiences, so it is not possible to advance in the work without completing this step.



Then, it is possible to choose between the dream or the nightmare door. This action will bring different sound and chromatic environments for the crossing of a corridor that represents the separation between the waking life for the dream universe, where the actions will be more sensory and intuitive. This universe is constituted by an immersive 3D environment, where navigation follows the structure of the games. However, the first-

person character does not follow rules to achieve explicit goals. The intention is that the exploration of this field occurs in a contemplative way, even though it allows access to two key elements of the work: 1) the message of the oracle; and 2) the word search, which finally leads the user to access his e-dream.

The oracle's message is a combinatory poem composed of six variables, each with ten different options, which makes repetition of a composition unlikely to happen since the chance of recurrence is very reduced. In addition, in the code, there is a ban on the repetition of a poem exactly as it was conveyed in its last configuration, which further reduces the likelihood of a user reading the same poem.



The title of the composition always repeats the structure “(variable) sends a message”, and, in the place of this first variable, we have ten options: Oracle, Artemidorus, Freud, Maya, Xoaltentli, Hypnos, Nyx, Morpheus, Icelos, Phantasos, Jurupari and Kerepiyua. These words represent characters or deities related to the world of dreams in different cultures. The same permutational logic remains in the rest of the poem's formulation, which in addition to the title, is composed of another three lines and five more variables.

Versions of the poem, in one of the three languages chosen for navigation, can appear on the screen of a TV that is in the 3D environment if the user clicks the call button. In this case, a TTS (text-to-speech) mechanism is activated, and the poem also receives an audio version, with the synthetic voice calibrated so that it does not have a regular humanly sound but is affected by the dreamlike atmosphere of the surroundings.





Thus, the e-dream is formed for the user by merging the images he chose through the selection made in the word search and the phrases he wrote earlier. From there, it is at the user's discretion to recreate an e-dream randomly using the elements of that same navigation or going back to the beginning of the process to make other options for reports and word choices. It is also possible to disable the display of the text on the formed image and download the created e-dreams, either to just keep these images with you or to share them digitally.

Oneirografia will be available for online access on the page: <https://www.andreacatropa.com/oneirografia>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the consultancy and support of Sérgio Nesteriuk. And the remote collaboration, respecting social distancing, by Felipe Mariani, responsible for Oneirografia's 3D modeling and coding.

REFERENCES

- [1] Catrópa, Andréa, 2020. *Sonhário de Praga - A manipulação dos algoritmos de busca a partir do desejo*. Proceedings of the International Conference on Digital Creation in Arts and Communication, ARTeFACTo2020. Faro, p.64-69.
- [2] Eligh, Blake, 2020. *Strange dreams during COVID-19? You're not alone, U of T researchers say*. University of Toronto News, Mississauga. Disponível em: <https://www.utoronto.ca/news/strange-dreams-during-covid-19-you-re-not-alone-u-t-researchers-say>. Data de acesso em: 6/4/2-2021
- [3] Ferreira, Anise de A. D., 2014. *Oneirokritika de Artemidouro de Daldis (séc. II DC): livros de análise de sonhos-livro V*. São Paulo, Editora Cultura Acadêmica.
- [4] Dunker, Christian. *Oniropolítica: nossos sonhos refletem o estado das coisas no Brasil*. 2020. Blog do Dunker. São Paulo. Disponível em: <https://blogdodunker.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2020/05/08/por-que-estamos-tendo-sonhos-mais-intensos-e-marcantes-durante-a-pandemia/>.
- [5] Ribeiro, Sidarta. 2019. *O oráculo da noite: a história e a ciência do sonho*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- [6] Cray, Jonathan. 2016. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. London: Verso, p.106.

[7] Freud, Sigmund, 2006. *Edição standard brasileira das obras psicológicas completas de Sigmund Freud*. Rio de Janeiro: Imago.