

« *Cinema, sogno e allucinazione dalle origini ai primi anni Venti (1895-1925)* », numéro de la revue *peer-review* de l'Association italienne de recherche en histoire du cinéma (AIRSC) *Immagine. Note di storia del cinema*, n°18, 2018, dirigé avec Silvio Alovio.

In May 1915, a curious piece of news appeared on the Italian journal "The Cinematographic Illustration": thanks to a complicated device called Onirograph, a scientist in Germany had finally found a way to film dreams. Though soon destined to oblivion, this bizarre and utterly implausible invention can be taken as a fragile symbol of one of the aspirations of modern science that has spurred the most frenetic activity, namely, the exploration and interpretation of the invisible realms of the infrapsychic and of extra-sensory perception. Dreams, which had been a central matter of reflection and experimentation well before Freudian theories of oneirology, were believed to provide the key to these invisible worlds. The scientific investigation of dreams, which gained momentum in the 19th and early 20th centuries, is part of a wider concern of Western culture for psychic phenomena such as hypnotic suggestion, automatism, telepathy, hallucinations, eidetic images, mediumistic phenomena, etc. Despite their resistance to objective inquiry, these phenomena were regarded as fascinating and problematic for their capacity to question and rearticulate the notions of the body and perception, of consciousness and reality. In their exploration of dreams and infrapsychic experience, the positivistic sciences were also joined by a variety of cultural practices and forms of knowledge whose status was often unstable, if not hard to distinguish from scientific speculation: magic, folklore and popular superstitions, theatrical and literary inventions, as well as pictorial and photographic iconography, all contributed to the hybrid cultural formation of modern oneirism.

The relations between dreaming and the cinema which emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century were among the outcomes of these intersecting traditions, experimentations, cultural imaginaries and forms of creativity. To put it simply, these relations were developed on at least two levels of interaction: On the one hand, a large number of films between 1896-1918 thematized dreaming, or rather, they "made it real" by visualizing the subjective oneiric scene through models of representations that were inevitably influenced by the cultural tradition and the pre Freudian theories of the time. On the other hand, cinema was often invoked by cultural, social and scientific discourses as a powerful and modern "spectral" technology, which offered spectators a perceptual experience whose conditions and effects were not so far from dreaming or hypnosis.

In the former case, the dream is a scenic construction, an actual product of the cinematographic representation, which calls into question the history of forms. In the latter case, the dream is a cultural frame through which to try and interpret the cinematographic experience itself, which calls into question the history of early cinema theories. Despite the growing literature on this subject, the editors are persuaded that research into dreaming and early cinema could be further developed on both levels of the relation, in that the set was sought to be considered jointly. This dossier is therefore aimed at living Italian and International scholars an opportunity to present their work in progress on the subject, and is open to interdisciplinary and intermedial projects with a view to encouraging a comparative, European and International approach to dreaming and cinema from about 1895 to 1918.

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Note di storia del cinema



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Paolo Emilio Persiani

Capture d'écran