

Poster Commemoration

D' HERVEY DE SAINT-DENYS (1822-1892)

Tribute

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Lecture spoken on the 31st of October 1992

during the commemoration of Léon d'Hervey de Saint-Denis,

organised by Oniros at the Collège de France & l'Harmattan,

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Some years ago, stimulated by the numerous references to the book 'les Rêves et les moyens de les diriger', I decided to study it. This 1867-book, completely dealing with the phenomenon of the (lucid) dream, was published anonymously, but was in later days contributed to Jean-Marie-Léon-LeCoq, marquis d'Hervey de Saint-Denys. The original edition was however hard to be found, nor was it easy to lay hands on the re-edition by Claude Tchou from 1964. Nevertheless with the help of Dr.Meijer from Rijksuniversity Utrecht I succeeded in it. When I read the original text, I concluded that all those people who had made references to this book, hardly had read it themselves; like parrots they had paraphrased each other!

About my findings with Dr.Meijer as co-author honoris causa I published in *Lucidity Letter* (Dec. 1988). With the article I enclosed an English translation from the Appendix, as well as the original couverture and frontispiece. In this article I expressed my astonishment about the fact there were so little personal data on d'Hervey available. He was by the way a prominent member of his society: Sinologue, writer, professor at the famous *College de France* and member of this Institute too. The bulk of the information which is available to us now has been derived from the by Jacques Donnars edited 1964 re-issue.

Today on this commemoration-100 years after the decease of Léon d'Hervey-we gather together to pay tribute and our respect to this great pioneer on the area of dreaming. I am very pleased with it.

I am not only pleased with this commemoration, but I am also content because without doubts, many among you will see in this commemoration a connection to study and discuss the original book. With regard to myself, today I will not loose myself in analytical observations concerning *les Rêves*. The articles of Vashide (1918), Leertouwer and Desoille (1964) present ample discussion material. I'm feeling very closed with d'Hervey, in the sense that he, like myself, was an autodidact on the area of the onirolgy. Historically speaking you can't consider him as the first lucid dreamer, but however, he was the first one who produced an extensive report on the subject. His "successors", Frederik van Eeden, Oliver Fox, Mary Arnold-Forster, a.o.recorded also their expe-riences, but they have not mounted the stage of

phenomenological descriptions. D'Hervey however was engaged in developing a theoretical concept.

'Les Rêves et les moyens de les diriger' is an exceptional book. Exceptional in the sense that it links phenomenology and experimental approach. It contains also an extensive report of numerous details about the onirological process.

I memorized before that d'Hervey was an autodidactic. As he describes himself in the first part of his book <<the author is nor doctor in the medicines, and more less in the philosophy. Which qualifications he possesses to touch such a delicate topic>> (éd. Oniros, page. 2).

Well, ladies and gentlemen. Marquis d'Hervey possessed many qualities: an original mind, a scientific education and taste for research. Also he knew what discipline meant and he had the necessary motivation to realize his life work.

His experiments, which you have to date within the context of his days, have been criticized as being the results of autosuggestion. We take notice of it.

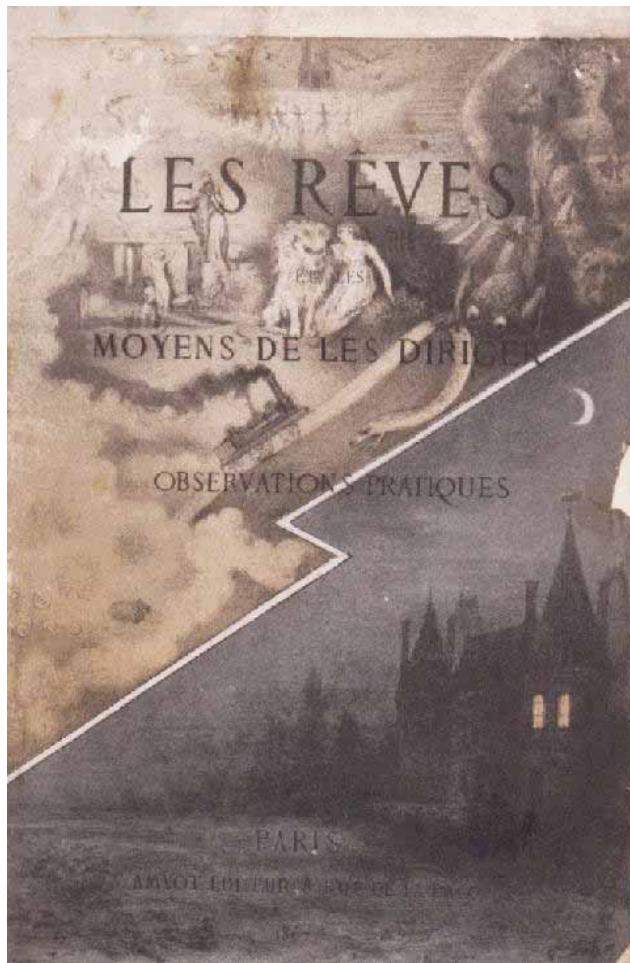
Saint-Denys' book has been written with talent in a flowery style. An aspect that the English adaptation by Morton Schatzman (1982) besides transparency lacks completely.

At the time of d'Hervey, Alfred Maury's work (1878) was considered being more scientific. Frankly speaking, I don't understand why. Perhaps the ideas of d'Hervey were too unorthodox for the scientists.

It's curious to think that les Rêves has been a result of the decision of a thirteen year old boy dedicating himself to the study of dreams. His journal (cahiers)<<twenty-two cahiers, full with colored drawings, represents a serie of 1946 nights, about to say 5 years vol.>>(pag.9).

In spite of my and Dr Allan Hobson's search (1988) up until now those cahiers has not been found. In a personal communication d'Hervey's family stated not to be in the possession of them neither to know if these documents still exist.

The original couverture of les Rêves is remarkably vivid.



As Vaschide(1918) wrote, <<The author has nothing forgotten concerning the principal movements of dreams[...]. At the top you will find an allegorical drawing: [...] the cathedral, lost in the distance [...], the biting fire, the snakes, the monsters, the ferocious animals [...]. He drew even a locomotive travelling through the air, bounding for a huge stair. The bottom page is more quietly: a castle at night, a little desolate.>>

Thanks to Roger Ripert, President of Oniros, we know nowadays that this castle is situated at Bréau-sans-Nappe around Ablis,



approximately 60 kilometres of Paris.



D' Hervey discovered that the recollection of dreams went better merely by the fact paying attention to them. I think that this method is an important element in reaching and maintaining the lucid dream state. The past years a lot of researchers has developed induction-techniques e.g. Dr.Stephen LaBerge's MILD (LaBerge, 1986). From own experience however I know that being lucidly requires an excellent dream memory. Without this quality it's possible to develop lucidity in dreams by those modern induction-techniques but the awareness of this state is <<misty>>, despite the fact that you can profit of some interventions.

With the recollection of four or five dreams a night, dreaming lucidly automatically starts. For that reason I consider the modern induction-techniques only as complementary. Whatever, by this simple method, d'Hervey booked remarkable results. As he sketches in his book, after one year he had three or four lucid dreams a night. After fifteen months it was almost daily and this skill did not seemed to have left him anymore (pag. 11).

D'Hervey stated there is no sleep without dreams. Nowadays it is to be considered as false. The assumption is that dreams are the results of REM-sleep (with rapid eye movement).I have doubts about that rigid dichotomy REM/NON-REM. How to explain e.g. the hypnagogic phase, as well as the reports of Tibetan yogi's who claim entering the dream state directly from the waking state and being able to maintain that consciousness throughout the night? Again from own experience, I am apted to choose the view of d'Hervey.

At the second part of his book the direction of dreams comes up for discussion. I am convinced Freud, would he have read the book

himself, and under the condition he found himself at the same level as d'Hervey, would have formulated his 'Traumdeutung' completely different. But we know nowadays that Freud only took note of d'Hervey's book by means of Vaschide's



paraphrases.

LE MARQUIS D'HERVEY DE SAINT-DENYS

Despite all the critics you can have on d'Hervey we have to honour him as the first one who developed a theoretical model concerning lucid dreaming. This commemoration implies the value and appreciation of d'Hervey's work. But rather boldly I state that his influence has about to begin. Indeed, we know that Denys' book had a limited edition and that only a few scientist had access to it. In fact it could be an explanation of Freud's dominant influence.

Modern oniologists had the advantage of d'Hervey having prepared the way. But which theoretical concepts have they developed up until now? D'Hervey still got us a lot to learn.