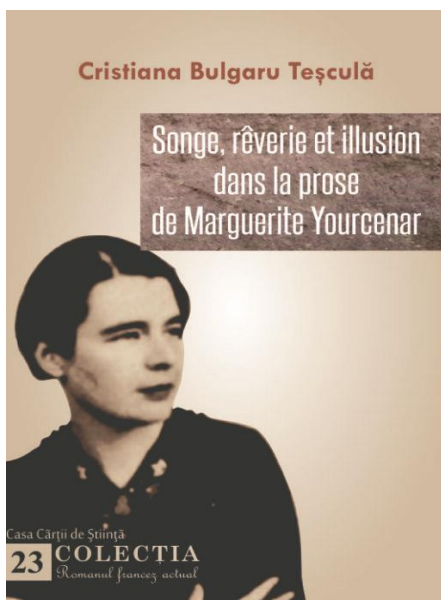


Decoding the Dream : Cristiana Bulgaru Teșculă: *Songe, rêverie et illusion dans la prose de Marguerite Yourcenar*

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Cristiana Bulgaru

Teșculă's work *Songe, rêverie et illusion dans la prose de Marguerite Yourcenar* (*Dream, Rêverie and Illusion in Marguerite Yourcenar's Prose*, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2015) is dedicated to one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century and aims to provide the readers with a means to decode the enigmas hidden inside Yourcenar's prose by exploring and analysing a few of the most relevant texts (the personal dreams transcribed by the author herself) included in the first edition of the volume *Les Songes et les Sorts*, published in 1938.

Since few literary studies dedicated to Marguerite Yourcenar's literary universe address the problem of dreams and the way they are

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defined and presented in the collection *Les Songes et les Sorts*, the author of this work has undertaken the difficult task of decoding the Yourcenarian dream by investigating specific aspects of her prose, in order to clarify the author's choice to present the readers with a global perspective on dreams, and not just the formal classification and common aspects of the personal dream, or the identification of the themes, motifs, similarities between the texts from *Les Songes et les Sorts* and other Yourcenarian texts.

This valuable study explores and minutely analyzes specific theoretical and formal aspects, starting with Marguerite Yourcenar's view on oneirism as described in the introduction of the first edition of the collection *Les Songes et les Sorts*, as well as in the second edition of the same volume, published in 1991, four years after her death. Because Yourcenar's theory applies exclusively to the nocturnal dream, Cristiana Bulgaru Teșculă's scientific aim is to open new paths of research of this complex topic, in order to establish at least one original new definition for the diurnal dream, which she defines as *rêve-rêverie* and for the voluntary illusion, which she calls *illusion volontaire*. At the same time, Cristiana Bulgaru Teșculă identifies, illustrates and comments on the thematic and formal similarities between *Les Songes et les Sorts* and other literary texts written by Yourcenar (*La maison brûlée* – belonging to the *rêves liriques ou hallucinés*, *Le rêve du 4 au 5 juin 1979* – where the author applies the formula of the *rêves commentés*), offering an original and extensive overview and analysis of Marguerite Yourcenar's own theory on oneirism.

Another significant aspect which is brought to the reader's attention by Cristiana Bulgaru Teșculă is the discrepancy between the nature of Yourcenar's personal authentic dreams from her youth, *les rêves liriques ou hallucinés* from the '30s and *rêves commentés* dating from the last stage of her life, between the '60s - '70s. The first ones are inspired by various elements belonging to different literary subjects and motifs, such as the fast succession of events, the passion for travel and the inclination for risk identifiable in the love story, the description of detective scenes, specific to the police novel, the vampire figure from the gothic novel. The second ones are amended by the author's own personal logic considerations on romantic walks, landscapes or autobiographical sequences.

Cristiana Bulgaru Teșculă's thorough analysis of Yourcenar's prose reveals new paths to discover and freely use the keys to open new imaginary doors to Yourcenar's prose, by using an extraliterary scale for describing dreams, while choosing a global perspective on the writer's own view of oneirism.

Les Songes et les Sorts contains an extensive introduction and twenty-two personal dreams dating from her youth, spanning over five

years (between the age of twenty-eight to the age of thirty-three) in which Marguerite Yourcenar provides the readers with a genuine reading guide, in which she accurately and comprehensively explains her theory of oneirism and the change of perspective on dreams, by highlighting the main elements of the stories that defined her ideas. According to the author, these transcriptions can be considered poems in prose because of their structure, atmosphere and visual effects, denying the authentic oneiric features of the texts. Later, Yourcenar realized she committed an error in depicting her texts as poems in prose and decided to publish a second version of *Les Songes et les sorts*, to which she planned to include fragments from *Mémoires d'Hadrien* and *L'Œuvre au Noir*.

Seven years before her death, Yourcenar expressed in her work *Les yeux ouverts* her intention to publish an extended volume containing the transcriptions of a few dreams dating from the last stage of her life, accompanied by notes and comments which were meant to better explain her later experiences as a dreamer and the contexts that led to the change of her perspective on the respective texts. In doing so, Yourcenar changes her position within the narrative sequences, depending on the given circumstances. She claims to be endowed with *le don de voir* (the gift of seeing, as she calls it in the introduction to the 1938 edition of *Les Songes et les Sorts*), thus proclaiming herself as the main authority who can alter the course of action and the destinies of the characters.

Yourcenar's vision on the multiple layers of dreams included in the first edition of *Les Songes et les Sorts* is traceable in the later periods of her creation, be it in fiction or in autobiographical texts, which are built on her personal authentic dreams and on the fictional dreams of her characters. Yourcenar's *rêve lyrique ou halluciné* is a means of revealing her inner self to the reader, by defining herself as *lyrique ou halluciné* dreamer or dream transcriptor, leaving aside her vocation of memorialist. This is the reason why in the prose of Marguerite Yourcenar there are many narrative sequences in which certain themes, motifs, characters and even dream fragments intertwine with the personal dream of the author erasing the imaginary line between reality and the oneiric realm.

Furthermore, Marguerite Yourcenar's view on dreams is compared by the author of this study with one of the many scientific definitions, more precisely with the one given by Jacques Montangero, a renowned specialist in cognitive psychology. According to Montangero, dreams are a series of visual representations appearing during sleep, inducing a state of visual hallucination. In his work *Rêve et cognition*, published in 1999, he expresses his perspective on dreams and establishes a descriptive pattern for dreams, focusing – just like Marguerite Yourcenar – on the similarities between the scientific and

literary aspects and various coordinates, such as time, space, action, characters and so on.

This may be one of the reasons why Marguerite Yourcenar includes a historical timeline of the evolution of dreams in *Les Songes et les Sorts*, choosing as main reference points the Greek Antiquity, the Classicism and the Surrealism, analyzing her personal dreams from the '30s and from the '60s - '70s, as well as the fictional dreams of characters such as Hadrien, Zénon and Lazare, the protagonists of the novels *Mémoires d'Hadrien* and *L'Œuvre au Noir*, and last but not least, of the short story *Une belle matinée*. In these texts the readers are helped by the author to identify various functions of dreams, presented as premonitions or means of anticipating the characters' death or to predict their personal fate and destiny. Thus, in order to build an imaginary bridge between the authentic dream and the fictional one, the author inserts the reveries and voluntary illusions of the characters in the storyline of *Denier du rêve*, where the dream becomes a means of rewriting the present.

All the characters from Yourcenar's works and the author – dreamer herself are united in the struggle to find freedom and face their fears on the journey to the center of their own inner universe. The oneiric realm can be as dangerous and treacherous as the desert or as the abyss of the oceans. It is our choice as readers to take the risk of exploring and challenging the unknown depth of the human soul.