

Just Write

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

Writers Group

Selections

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Freeholder Director, **Robert M. Damming** | Freeholder Library Liaison, **Lyman Barnes**



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A Muhammad Ma`ruf

Dreams and Literary Creativity: Maria Zambrano

Maria Zambrano (1904-1991) was a Spanish philosopher and author of a provocative essay on dreams and literary creativity. Her thesis was published as part of the proceedings of an international Colloquium on comparative studies of dreams held in France in 1962¹. Later decades have seen book length works on the link between dreams and literary and other forms of creativity. However, her earlier work has not been acknowledged.

During the 1960s when Zambrano's paper was published, the creative potential of dreams was not something that dream researchers, thought or wrote much about. In her short paper, Zambrano examined literary creative dreams to address that potential. Her paper was framed within an unconventional understanding of sleep and dream phenomena, and contained observations on the obsessiveness of dreams and the relationship of dreams to identity conflicts that writers may have to grapple with.

She wrote that modern "normal" man has lost contact with the rest of his being. His body and his soul are as strange phenomena to him. "With this besieged conscience ... he thinks that analysis is the only method of acquiring an understanding of himself and of that obscure zone of his dreams... dreams that are the dawn of conscience."

According to Zambrano, dreams especially the dreams of poets "come from a waking state. They are in fact a waking state. If this were not so, wakefulness could not capture them".

Zambrano's approach to "literary creative dreams" is that they suggest a conflict without an immediately apparent solution, an "aporia". However this conflict can be resolved by "deciphering" the dream, and guiding it toward its place within a larger reason, "a broad, total reason, a poetic reason, both metaphysical and religious". By

¹ G.E. Von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois ed. 1966. *The Dream and Human Societies*: 189-198.

guiding the dream, a creative writer transforms his/her dream from its obscurity into the world of "clarity of conscience".

Zambrano recognizes that the dream has to be told, and proposes that it can be "guided" toward its fulfillment. She also suggests that the circumscription that the dream imposes on the dreamer can, and is, transcended in the elaborations that authors make of their dreams in their written works.

These assertions ran counter to the general trend of psychoanalytic and materialistic approaches to dreams, dominant in her time.

In Freudian thought dreams are reactive and retrospective. As such there are no chapters by Freud on dreams and creativity or about dream narratives or plots.

Many publications appearing after the 1970s indicate a rebirth of a dreaming culture among some Americans marked by, among other things, a change in the orientation toward dreams, away from the Freudian emphasis. Some dreams are now believed to have a "problem solving" function. Zambrano's earlier, briefer work had already made a case for a progressive and creative role for dreams.

[With thanks to members of the Writers Group who have critiqued drafts of longer versions of this essay.]

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MYSTERY

Jane Harre

A pale green insect whose body is less than half an inch long and the thickness of a darning needle, with legs the thickness of thread travels or hesitates on the wall by my desk. I watch. It knows just how to move its six legs, randomly to my view, to navigate the wall surface.

Shortly, I turn the pages of my Bible, which is lying on the surface of my desk, eight or ten inches from the insect. This action creates a “wind” which touches the insect whose movement indicates to me its perception of the moving air.

Although the insect perceived that wind, what enormity to think of all that is outside of its understanding: the desk, the huge human being who is watching, the Bible full of printed words on thin paper bound together, with meaning which the human can decipher, and so on.

We humans are small in the universe, but perhaps much smaller than we, in our tiny perceptions, can possibly imagine. We simply do not have the faculties, despite so many advances, to look or think far enough.

Because we cannot imagine a God so infinite, planning and creating all that is, with the integration of all the parts, we think He cannot exist. However, simply because I am outside of the scope of my insect friend’s imagination does not negate my existence or my power. If we are unable to imagine an Intelligence so grand, let us at least leave the question open.

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INCOMING

What does a poet know of science and physics
Well, and that could be deep-
With their wide open lyrics
We hope they don't put us to sleep.

Now we all know that SOUND
NICELY in physics with rhythm and rhyme
Never lets us down
Notes, so in music, sublime.

A seemingly awkward attempt
To avoid dissonance
Suspended our pendent wishing
Which lead us to our penitence.

So here we go listening
Hearing wishing our words
Pair sounds with glistening
Tearing spearing swishing.

Hey hey hay through
This sway swish dish fish
Our medium this day
Be it liquid, gas or solid we squish it.

Outer space to Earth
Trace the sound inward bound
From none to some
Hear it comes.

As Thumper would say in Reggae
Thump THUMP, thump thump
Bumptity, bump bump. BUMP.
Its my way to pray.

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The Haunted Quilt
Fictional Short Story
By Caroline Kalfas

"Some people swore that the house was haunted," said Justine, her eyes as big and blue as the costume bobbles dangling from her stretched-out ear lobes.

She practically whispered as she spoke about the house to Marguerite, whose T-shirt featured a picture of her new grandson, and Betty, who got scared at the mention of anything spooky.

They were waiting their turn to use the iron inside The Sewing Barn, where they met each week to learn a new quilting technique. This week, the instructor, Nancy, was teaching applique.

The fourth member of the class, Yvonne, was across the room showing Nancy her project -- an appliqued house.

"I can't believe Yvonne put that haunted house on her quilt," said Justine, looking past Marguerite and Betty to make sure her voice didn't carry.

"Are you talking about the house that got torn down behind the movie theater?" asked Marguerite. "That was a two-story house, Justine. Yvonne appliqued a one-story ranch house."

"It's the same house, Marguerite. You just don't recognize it. But I do. She has quilted a haunted house," Justine said. "All it needs now is a witch and a broomstick."

Betty was getting jittery.

"I'm not looking at that quilt," she said, shaking her gray curls in the direction of "no way." "Why would anyone want to quilt such a thing?" Justine finished her ironing and quickly joined Nancy's critique of "the haunted quilt."

"Didn't she do a great job? Her stitches are so even," Nancy said.

Justine touched the fabric and sighed.

"Well, it's different, choosing to make a haunted house. But if you add a few bats in the sky, it would make a great piece for fall. You could display it at Halloween," she said.

"A haunted house?" Yvonne asked.

"I love it. It's spooky," Justine said. "You could add a full moon. I saw some yellow fabric on the fat quarter table."

Yvonne was hurt. She had spent hours cutting squares and triangles and piecing them together hoping to make an image of the house she and her husband had bought recently next to the golf course. She wanted to put the wall-hanging in the entryway to welcome visitors.

"Boo!" Justine said with those blue eyes bugging.

Yvonne left the class feeling disappointed and in a spell of doubt.

She turned off the car in her driveway and looked at her beautiful home.

Add a few gargoyles, broken shutters and a widow's walk and the house

might look haunted, she thought.

Yvonne went inside to her new dream sewing room and lay the quilt on the table. She cut fabric in the shapes of bats, pumpkins, a full moon and a black cat. She strategically placed them on the quilted house but couldn't bring herself to sew them on. She took the pieces off and put them away. Her daughter, Sarah, came home from classes at the community college.

"What are you making?" she asked.

"A haunted house," Yvonne said.

Sarah took a sip of the frappe she had bought on campus and studied her mom's work.

"This doesn't look like a haunted house. It looks like our home," she said. "It would look great in the front hallway, don't you think?"

Yvonne looked at the house again. She finished the project and hung it in the foyer as suggested.

"You broke the spell," Yvonne told Sarah.

"What spell?" she asked.

"The spell of Justine's haunting critiques," Yvonne said and smiled.

Nothing was ever the same again after that.

Just Write

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