'Dreams and Atrocity: Reflections on Modern and Contemporary Trauma in Art, Literature and Visual Culture'

Call for Papers

120 years after Sigmund Freud first posited his seminal theorisation of dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), cultural interest in sleep and dreaming is becoming increasingly pronounced, both within, and outside of, scholarly spheres. In popular culture, medical-scientific questions of how and why we sleep as well as our capacity to dream and its function have gained particular attention over the last decade, leading to a host of successful non-fiction titles centred on oneiric experience (Matthew Walker's *Why We Sleep* (2017); David Randall's *Dreamland* (2013)). In memory and trauma studies, dreams continue to occupy an important space in relation to the processing of memories as well as traumatic experience via flashbacks and nightmares. Until very recently, however, the latter have largely been considered as belated symptoms of PTSD only, rather than phenomena worthy of study in their own right.

Recent efforts have been made to elevate the importance of the dream beyond exclusively psychoanalytic frameworks, in the arts and humanities especially. Dream researchers such as Douglas Hollan, for instance, have outlined the importance of methodological approaches to dreams that focus upon 'what they might be expressing more literally about social and personal experience', while others, like Max Silverman and Wojciech Owczarski, have invoked the dreamlike in relation to specific historical realities: namely, the Holocaust. Yet the dream remains relatively understudied in these contexts despite renewed critical attention, and despite the ubiquity of dream- or nightmare-like constructions and representations of historical atrocity in recent fiction and film.

Please consider contributing to this edited collection on 'Dreams and Atrocity: Reflections on Modern and Contemporary Trauma in Art, Literature and Visual Culture', which aims to fill this critical gap in scholarship by exploring twentieth- and twenty-first-century traumas through the lens of the dream or dreamlike. More specifically, this collection will closely examine the political and historical importance of dreams as representational tools or modes of witnessing that can offer new aesthetic and theoretical frameworks within which to analyse moments of acute human and ecological atrocity, be they war, genocide, colonialism, ecocide/extinction, colonialism, gender oppression or the ongoing refugee crisis. It wants to develop diverse and interdisciplinary theorisations, readings and applications of the dream or dreamlike that respond to the following:

- In what ways are dreams deployed to convey trauma in literature, art and visual culture?
- What can dreamlike representations of historical atrocity tell us about the nature of (collective) traumatic experience and the unconscious?
- What characterises the relationship between dreams, trauma and memory?
- What are the tensions between dreams, which are self-effacing and elusive phenomena, and history?
- Can we consider dreams as modes of resisting, as well as bearing witness to, historical atrocity?
- How might we think of dreams and nightmares as performing or otherwise queering history?
- What power might dreams harness in particularly dark and uncertain times?
- To what extent can we consider dreaming as a political exercise?

With its focus on modern and contemporary cultural production, this collection aims to shed new light on the decidedly oneiric nature of recent and ongoing traumatic events – some of which are

susceptible to technologies of forgetting precisely because of the ways in which they are dreamlike, or, more fittingly, nightmarish.

Please submit clear and concise abstracts of 300 words with a title and author bio (no more than 100 words) to Emily-Rose Baker and Diane Otosaka at erbaker1@sheffield.ac.uk and mldmo@leeds.ac.uk by 20th December 2019. Notifications of acceptance will be sent on 20th January 2020 and completed essays of 6-7,000 words should be submitted by 20th May 2020.