DREAMS AND THE PASSIONS IN REVOLUTIONARY ENGLAND

Richard J. Scott

A thesis submitted to the Department of History in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
(May 2014)
Abstract

Between 1640 and 1660, England suffered a profound political, religious and social revolution, with its roots in the broader crisis over the nature of religious truth precipitated by the long Reformation. This thesis explores one element of this crisis over divine truth—the nature and origins of dreams, their status as reliable knowledge, and pragmatic and psychological responses to them as experiences. Dreams are explored as a powerful conceptual category in a number of contexts, including medical literature and theological writings concerned with the soul, prophecy and cosmology; the sermons and confessional literature of puritan and Anglican divines; and a diverse range of ‘radical’ and ‘occult’ texts imported to England and produced at home after the lapse of censorship in the 1640s. The study not only gives renewed attention to changes in the concepts, identities and practices constructed around dreams in intellectual discourses, but demonstrates the many ways in which they were in contestation; draws out their intimate relationship to wider intellectual struggles of the day in greater depth than previous studies; and highlights a variety of heretofore unappreciated attempts to integrate regard for and study of dreams into Christian philosophical thinking in the seventeenth-century.
# CONTENTS

*Introduction* 1

I. Trembling Spirits: Sleep, Dreams and Human Nature 39

II. The Eye of God: Dreams and Revelations in Revolutionary England 85

III. Climbing Jacob’s Ladder: Sacred and Profane Dreams in Protestant Conscience Literature 119

IV. The Wisdom of Daniel: On the Interpretation of Dreams 193

V. Conclusions 194

Bibliography 200
**Abbreviations**

- **MS**: Manuscript (plural MSS)
- **Vol.**: Volume (plural vols)
- **f.**: Folio(s): sheet number, when referring to a manuscript source in which sheets are numbered on the front face only (plural ff.)
- **di.**: Early English Books Online document image
- **BL**: British Library
- **HP**: *The Hartlib Papers: A Complete Text and Image Database of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib (C. 1600-1660)* Held in Sheffield University Library, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, 2002) [also available online at http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/hartlib]
“**To** draw a curious picture of a shadow, or elegantly write the history of a dream, may be an ingenuous kind of foolery; but the end will not allow it the name of Wisdom.”

— Richard Baxter
Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the steady guidance and encouragement of my supervisors Mike Braddick and James Shaw, who nurtured it through to completion. Gary Rivett has offered insightful criticism and valuable advice on related work in preparation for publication. Thanks to Robin Parker, Daniel Murphy, Kate Davison, Laura Bracey and the rest of the postgrad community at Sheffield History Department for their constant friendship and support throughout the last four years. Likewise, the warmth and friendship of Ben and Amy Lacey will always remain inseparable in my mind from the special qualities that distinguish Sheffield. Thanks are due to Dan for pointing out Peter of Celle's take on Gallic and Anglic dreams, and to Leigh Penman for alerting me to his discovery that Hartlib and Beale exchanged a copy of Philip Goodwin's dream manual.

Thanks to my parents, whose support and understanding through the varied and sometimes rocky terrain that accompanies a project like the Ph.D. has been a great blessing. My time as a doctoral student has been greatly enriched by volunteering as a call-taker at Nightline and as a residential mentor for the University accommodation services, and I am grateful to everyone who helped to make those experiences welcoming and life-affirming.

And last of all I’d like to thank Laurence Peacock, Liz Pearl, Kate Mitchell and Jojo Cox, who continue to remain with me every step of the way.