

# ROMAN OPINIONS ABOUT THE TRUTHFULNESS OF DREAMS\*

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Ma è un argomento sfruttato, sfruttatissimo! — Cesare Musatti, *Questa notte ho fatto un sogno*, p. 13

## I. INTRODUCTION

Let us start by considering a remarkable text. At the very beginning of the second half of his account of the reign of Nero, Tacitus tells at some length a tale about the emperor and a dream (*Ann.* 16.1–3): one Caesellius Bassus, ‘origine Poenus, mente turbida’, dreamt that there was a cavern full of treasure on his estates.<sup>1</sup> He was so confident about the dream that (without identifying the cavern) he sailed from Africa to Rome, where he convinced the emperor; Nero accordingly expected new revenue and spent still more extravagantly. Later, before the disappointed and desperate Caesellius committed suicide, ‘posita vaecordia’, he expressed surprise, claiming that his dreams had never before been false (‘non falsa antea somnia sua . . . admirans’). An alternative version said that he did not commit suicide but merely had his property confiscated. Tacitus is in any case most disapproving, and tells the story at unusual length with the obvious intention of suggesting that Nero was as insane as Caesellius.

We may react to the palpable otherness of this world in various ways. A historian is likely to ask whether the reactions of Caesellius or Tacitus to this dream were characteristic of their respective ages, more generally whether Romans of other periods would have reacted similarly, and more generally still what it meant in the Roman world to consider a dream true or false (and were those the only categories?). Although Greek and Roman dreams have been subjected to a great deal of scholarly attention,<sup>2</sup> there exists no satisfactory account of what Romans thought about the likelihood that a dream could provide reliable information or foretell future events. There are other open questions about Roman dreams too,<sup>3</sup> but this paper will concentrate on the matter of veracity. Scholars normally assert that almost everyone in antiquity believed in the mantic potential of dreams, without asking what counted as a prediction in the classical world, or what it meant to ‘believe’, or how one might find out what was believed by ‘almost everyone’, or how reactions may have changed. They also tend to expect human beings to be logically consistent, whereas it might be worth hypothesizing that, in some periods, most people regarded most dreams as nonsense while at the same time supposing that certain dreams were genuine omens.

Diverse circumstances add to the interest of this question. For one thing, we cannot detach dream-prediction from its religious context, which means that we ideally ought to consider, in addition to a virtual industry of incubatory shrines, the many other forms of divination that were practised, not to mention prevailing ideas about the willingness of the gods to reveal the future. What is and is not a fruitful or legitimate reading of literary works in various genres — Cicero’s *De republica* and *De divinatione*, for example, but also a large range of narrative texts — is another part of our problem. As fashions of

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<sup>1</sup> A long-established dream subject: Hdt. 5.92; Cic., *De div.* 2.134, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent contributions, which can lead one

back into most of the others, are G. Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike* (2000); P. Kragelund, ‘Dreams, religion and politics in Republican Rome’, *Historia* 50 (2001), 53–95; C. Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung* (2001).

<sup>3</sup> Another one is dealt with in a paper entitled ‘*Insomnia*: the content of Roman dreams’, which will appear in a volume in memory of Martin Frederiksen (ed. W. V. Harris and E. Lo Cascio).

interpretation change, passions do not diminish. At least I hope to present an internally coherent view, and to indicate what is most uncertain.

Something must be said about the modern history of this topic. While the major turning-point in the modern study of dreams came in 1953 with the publication of Aserinsky and Kleitman's paper about Rapid Eye Movement,<sup>4</sup> a book published two years earlier had in subsequent decades a more pronounced effect on the study of classical dreams, namely *The Greeks and the Irrational* — one of those books that appeared just when people were ready for it. Dodds notably revised his views about ancient dreams in *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (1968). But in a very rhetorical passage of his earlier and more influential book, he put before the reader a simplistic choice between 'the primitives' attitude towards dreams and that of the 'nineteenth-century missionaries'.<sup>5</sup> Any thought that psychologists might in the future make some progress on this admittedly difficult subject was inaudible. The chapter on dreams in *The Greeks and the Irrational* begins with a quotation from Victor Hugo,<sup>6</sup> and the descent of some of Dodds's epigoni from the nineteenth-century Romantics is plain. Some of them do not simply believe, as Freud did, that dreams are the royal road into the unconscious, they think that dreams are half of experience and, in some cases, that it is an arbitrary choice — imposed presumably by some sort of Enlightenment thought-police — to set waking experience *above* dream experience.<sup>7</sup> It is no coincidence that this point of view has sometimes been attributed to 'primitive' populations, for that in some people's eyes is a form of validation.<sup>8</sup> The effect of this kind of thinking was to marginalize those ancients who were sceptical of or indifferent to the possibility of dream-prediction (they may have been marginal, but we can only find out by looking).

What people think now about the actual nature and significance of dreaming is not our concern in this paper. But when a scholar writes that 'for the contemporaries of [Aelius] Aristides, dreams represented *reality* in so far as [they have] a degree of truth that predominates over waking life',<sup>9</sup> a vast error is being made. This is a crude reading of Aelius himself, and as for his contemporaries, even his own pages show (see below) that some of them did not at all approve of taking medical advice from dreams, though that was a very long-established practice. It is something quite different to say, as Bowersock does, that 'dreaming was . . . an important part of the spiritual and intellectual life of the Greeks and Romans in the time of the Roman empire'<sup>10</sup> — though even that sane judgement is, I suggest, in need of some modification.

After some necessary preliminaries (I), I shall attempt to distinguish between the predictive dream, the auspicious dream, and other kinds of truth-content which a dream might be deemed or felt to possess (II), and then consider the possibility that there was

<sup>4</sup> E. Aserinsky and N. Kleitman, 'Regularly occurring periods of eye motility, and concomitant phenomena, during sleep', *Science* 118 (1953), 273-4.

<sup>5</sup> *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), 102-3. Dodds' own credulity about 'paranormal' phenomena is partly documented in *Missing Persons: an Autobiography* (1977). But Dodds' views should not be simplified: he also wrote that 'the civilized rationalism of *de divinatione* book 2 . . . has hardly been sufficiently appreciated' (134 n. 118).

<sup>6</sup> 'S'il était donné à nos yeux de chair de voir dans la conscience d'autrui, on jugerait bien plus sûrement un homme d'après ce qu'il rêve que d'après ce qu'il pense'. The quotation comes from *Les Misérables*. Not one in a hundred of us agrees, I suspect.

<sup>7</sup> See for example J. Thomas, 'Der Traum: Wege der Erkenntnis im klassischen Altertum', in G. Benedetti and E. Hornung (eds), *Die Wahrheit der Träume* (1997), 145-85. P. C. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity* (1994), goes some way along this path when she writes, for example, that Roman divination had the 'ability to provide techniques for meditating on human problems' (9); there is no foundation for this, though there is a lively controversy as to whether scientists who have been close to solving problems have ever found the right answer in a dream (an

entirely different matter). Of course it was often said in antiquity, from Pindar onwards, that human life was only a dream, or a nightmare; see the references gathered by Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in the Age of Anxiety* (1968), 9 n. 4.

<sup>8</sup> cf. R. Caillois, 'Logical and philosophical problems of the dream', in G. E. von Grunebaum and R. Caillois (eds), *The Dream and Human Societies* (1966), 23-52, at 29-33 (this is the von Grunebaum so vividly evaluated by E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978), 296-9). For anthropologists who have held that their study populations have thought of dreams as being *as true as* real events see A. H. M. Kessels, 'Ancient systems of dream classification', *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969), 389-424, at 389 n. 2.

<sup>9</sup> G. Michenaud and J. Dierkens, *Les rêves dans les "Discours Sacrés" d'Aelius Aristide* (1972), 29. The evidence cited is that Artemidorus thought that gods and ancestors sometimes truly appeared in dreams. Readers will understand that in treating Aelius, Artemidorus, and other Greeks who lived under Roman power as 'Romans' I am employing shorthand, and not eliminating cultural differences.

<sup>10</sup> G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (1994), 97.

some change in Roman ideas about the truthfulness of dreams between the middle Republic (III) and a period, beginning in the late Republic, when some sceptical voices were raised (but how effectively?) (IV). The following section (V) will attempt to show the complexity of Roman attitudes in a period, from Flavian to Severan times, which has often been thought of — understandably — as one of widespread trust in the veracity of dreams.

Since Bouché-Leclercq and indeed before, it has commonly been said that almost everyone in antiquity believed that (some) dreams came from the gods and predicted the future. They were, so to speak, the cousins of the responses given by oracles. 'Only the Epicureans and the adherents of the New Academy objected' to the belief that dreams were sent by the gods, 'but even they did not necessarily reject the prophetic and revealing character of dreams', so the Edelsteins wrote.<sup>11</sup> 'Dreams . . . were believed all through antiquity to be divine manifestations, prophetic in nature', says another scholar, without qualification.<sup>12</sup> Price was much more circumspect: 'the existence of predictive dreams was generally accepted in the ancient world'.<sup>13</sup>

There is plenty of evidence which at first glance seems to support such views: after all, Aristotle remarks at the beginning of his little book *About Divination in Sleep* that 'all or many people suppose that dreams have something significant about them' (*echein ti semeiodes*) (I.462b14–15) — carefully chosen words, and this may very well not have changed much in Hellenistic times or under Roman rule.<sup>14</sup> The most impressive evidence of all from the Roman Empire may be the large number of surviving inscriptions (there are nearly 400 of them, according to Gil Renberg, who recently made a special study of them for his doctoral dissertation) which state that so-and-so made a dedication because of a dream.<sup>15</sup> Yet what almost everyone thought in antiquity is often hard to discover, and as we shall see there is a good deal of contrary evidence. If the necessary limitations are omitted, the standard opinion is mistaken.

It might give us pause, to start with, that the partisan but experienced dream-interpreter Artemidorus of Daldis knew that some people held views sharply different from his own. 'I have been afraid', he writes, 'of the adverse criticism of those . . . who believe there is no such thing as divination or as providence of the gods . . . from the superabundance of examples, I am able . . . to prove the truth of my assertions comprehensively and clearly . . .' (I.*proem.*). Evidently he did not believe that he was operating in a world in which everyone agreed with him.

An elementary error to avoid is the presumption that everyone — or even very many — thought about dreams in the same way as the authors of the two most extensive dream-texts of the high Roman Empire, namely Artemidorus and Aelius Aristides (whose views we should keep separate). Aelius was clearly part of a very substantial group of Greeks (and others?) who sought medical help from their dreams, but some of his friends criticized him for acting on his dreams so much, and he portrays his doctors

<sup>11</sup> A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* I (1879), 278; E. J. and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius: a Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (1945), II, 157, where what astonishes most is that no distinction is made between different kinds of dreams. In my view, hardly anyone in antiquity thought that *all* dreams were revealing (Tertullian, *De anima* 46.3, alleges that this was an eccentricity of the people of Talmessus).

<sup>12</sup> N. Lewis, *The Interpretation of Dreams and Portents* (1976), 99.

<sup>13</sup> S. Price, 'The future of dreams: from Freud to Artemidorus', *Past and Present* 113 (1986), 3–37, at 11. According to R. A. Pack, 'Artemidorus and his waking world', *TAPhA* 86 (1955), 280–90, at 280: 'In the age of the Antonines . . . most men considered their dream-experiences . . . prophetic'. According to Miller, *op. cit.* (n. 7), 9, 'the question of divination's rationality did not seem to most late antique [but she means 'Roman-period'] thinkers to be a question worthy of debate. Cicero was the major exception . . .' (dreams were her subject here). Cf. F. T. van Straten,

'Daikrates' dream. A votive relief from Kos, and some other *kat'onar* dedications', *BABesch* 51 (1976), 1–27, at 14. R. G. A. van Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams* (1980), 6, took a less orthodox line: 'only in exceptional cases was serious attention paid to dreams by normal people in normal daily life'. P. Veyne, 'De Halai en Dalmatie: un voeu de voyageur et les rêves chez Virgile', in *Poikilia. Etudes offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant* (1987), 381–95, at 384, also swam against the current: see below, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Any attempt to write a chapter of the cultural history of the Roman Empire faces the difficulty that very many of its inhabitants were Romans only in some attenuated sense. I have no solution for this problem except to stay alert for cultural differences.

<sup>15</sup> The best study of these texts so far is Veyne, *op. cit.* (n. 13). Dr Renberg defended his dissertation in the Classics Department at Duke University in April 2003. L. R. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions* (1995), is also a useful treatment of some of this material.

as having been sceptical about the advice his dreams gave him on the subject of what was apparently his most serious illness, his 'tumour'.<sup>16</sup> His initial reaction to that illness had been to turn to ordinary doctors; it was only when they despaired that he turned to dreams,<sup>17</sup> perhaps rather as modern patients suffering from terminal cancer sometimes turn to 'alternative medicine'. Artemidorus sought out stories about dreams from ordinary people, but he expected opposition. And dream-books such as his were not in fact, to judge from the papyrus survivals, very widely read: palm-reading instructions were more popular.<sup>18</sup>

Since it was always obvious to Greeks and Romans that not many dreams predict the future *in a literal sense*, interpretation was constantly necessary, and *oneiropoloi*, dream-interpreters, are already attested in Homer (*Iliad* 1.62–3). They continued to exist in the Hellenistic world and when the Greeks were under Roman dominion. Mid- and late republican Rome had its paid *coniectores* or interpreters of dreams, some of those of the late Republic being *Isiaci coniectores*,<sup>19</sup> who presumably interpreted the dreams which devout Isis-worshippers received through incubation. Quintus Cicero, when he is represented in *De divinatione* as putting the case *in favour* of divination, professes to despise both types, and Artemidorus suggests that this was the general attitude of the literate classes.<sup>20</sup> Juvenal reflects a similar attitude (6.546–7). All this contempt may have resulted in part from the fact that while most people suspected that some dreams had, as Aristotle says, 'something significant about them', they doubted that except in rare cases you could tell what a dream signified. However, the interpreters stayed in business.

Anyone with any education at all knew that a dream could be misleading, even if it seemed to come from a god. The first dream in the *Iliad* deceived Agamemnon, and Homer calls him a fool for having believed it (2.38).<sup>21</sup> Many must have known about the Gates of Ivory (through which, Penelope says, false dreams reach us), and they became even better known after Vergil mentioned them at the end of *Aeneid* 6.<sup>22</sup> Even the paid oneiromancers must generally have avoided the trap of claiming that *all* dreams had predictive force — Artemidorus himself regarded a lot of dreams as rubbish,<sup>23</sup> and was well aware that some were simply erotic wish-fulfillments.<sup>24</sup>

Dreams continued to be a by-word for the insubstantial and the deceptive. The fundamental fact, never explained by the 'irrationalists' — those who think that dreams 'were believed all through antiquity to be divine manifestations' — is that the languages themselves prove otherwise. It was the decision of the population at large, not of an intellectual élite, that Latin *somniare*, from Plautus onwards, quite often meant 'to have illusions'. The Romans must generally have been suspicious about the truth-content of

<sup>16</sup> *Orat.* 47.63; 62 and 67. It is not clear what was wrong with him (see C. A. Behr's n. 89 in his translation of this work (1981)).

<sup>17</sup> See C. A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides and The Sacred Tales* (1968), 22, and cf. A.-J. Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (1954), 99–100. Compare what is said about the role of Imhotep/Imouthes/Asclepius in *P.Oxy.* xi.1381, ll. 53–6 (second century).

<sup>18</sup> Artemidorus 'consorted for many years with the deeply despised diviners (*manteis*) of the marketplace' (1. *prooem.*). A. J. Pomeroy, 'Status and status-concern in the Greco-Roman dream-books', *Ancient Society* 22 (1991), 51–74, maintains that Artemidorus' approach was the popular one, a view to which we shall return. R. A. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt* (2nd edn, 1967), lists no dream-books among the Greek literary papyri (palmomancy is better represented), which does not of course mean that dream-predictions and dream-epiphanies were anything like absent from that world (note once again *P.Oxy.* xi.1381, the Imouthes papyrus). It is true that many Greeks and Romans wrote specialized books about the interpretation of

dreams (Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.* (n. 11), I, 277 n.\*, lists some thirty-four names), but we are more interested here in what was read than in what was written.

<sup>19</sup> Plaut., *Curculio* 246–50; *Miles* 693 (female); Cic., *De div.* 1.132. It has sometimes been argued that the latter passage is part of a quotation from Ennius.

<sup>20</sup> *De div.* 1.132 (cf. 2.145); Artem. 1. *prooem.*

<sup>21</sup> In *Il.* 2.79–83 wise Nestor says that if Agamemnon's dream had been recounted by anyone else, 'we would have said that it was a falsehood and we would have turned our backs on it', and he noticeably avoids saying that it is true even coming from Agamemnon.

<sup>22</sup> *Od.* 19.562–7; *Aen.* 6.893–9. There is no need to list the numerous allusions elsewhere.

<sup>23</sup> 5. *prooem.*: 'it was difficult and laborious to attempt to gather together only those dreams that were worth recording — for it is very easy and takes no time at all to record a large number of random dreams'. This was a very long-standing opinion: Pindar believed in veridical dreams (fr. 131), but also thought that they were (typically) meaningless (*Pyth.* 8.95–6). As to how one might argue away the fact that many dreams were 'false', see Cic., *De div.* 1.60.

<sup>24</sup> 1.78 p. 88 ll. 12–15 Pack.

a dream. 'Utrum deliras, quaeso, an astans somnias . . .?' (Plaut., *Cist.* 291).<sup>25</sup> Greek dream-words quite often have the same connotation — not often enough, however, to prove that most people were sceptics.<sup>26</sup>

## II. 'COMING TRUE' AND 'BELIEVING'

There was truth and truth. To suppose that a dream had been truthful was by no means necessarily to suppose that it had predicted an event that subsequently took place. In the first place, a predictive dream would often need to be interpreted before it could be said to yield up truth. The *oneiropoloi* and *coniectores* could make almost anything sound true,<sup>27</sup> to some people. It was of course part of the Greek and Roman tradition of dream-understanding that dreams were sometimes tricking and ambiguous, like oracles: Hamilcar, while besieging Syracuse, dreamt that he would dine in the city next day, and he did — as a prisoner (Cic., *De div.* 1.50); just as Pompey, before Pharsalus, supposedly dreamt that he was decorating the temple of Venus Victrix with trophies, which he duly did — as the loser (Plu., *Pomp.* 68).

But the main point here is that a dream's validity was considered to have been established in a variety of ways, some of which had nothing to do with correct prediction. Van Lieshout gave a lucid and helpful account of the similar situation that prevailed in archaic and classical Greece.<sup>28</sup> The *Iliad* notwithstanding, divine epiphanies, which form a large proportion of the testimony, seem generally to have been taken seriously, as one would expect. But the gods might look just like ordinary humans (Artemid. 2.44). They offered instructions more often than predictions, and dreams provided information about their current dispositions and other hard-to-ascertain matters. When Juno, in a dream, uttered a threat in her own interest, it could be considered obvious that it was really she who had spoken (Cic., *De div.* 1.48). If the dreamer disobeyed what might be a divine instruction and afterwards suffered, the dream was normally, I assume, considered to have been 'proved', *comprobatum* (ibid., 1.55) (a technical term). Sulla told Lucullus that divine orders in dreams were 'the most secure' things (Plu., *Sull.* 6; *Luc.* 23) (we shall consider later whether Sulla's social milieu is likely to have agreed).

But a dream might also, for instance, be considered divine if it had served as a means of telepathic communication between friends.<sup>29</sup> When Drusus appeared in Pliny Senior's dreams and told him to write the history of the German wars, Pliny obeyed, so at least the nephew said;<sup>30</sup> it was a valid dream though not exactly a prediction. Perpetua's dreams conformed symbolically to what a certain kind of Christian imagined would soon happen, or hoped would happen — and they were undoubtedly considered by the pious to be truthful.

But the most important point of all may be that a dream was considered by some people to have been prophetic if it was simply followed by a favourable turn of events — or by an unfavourable one. We shall meet a number of examples of this. According to Artemidorus, an *oneiros* (which in his language is a dream which has a truthful message, *apobainei*) 'signifies good or evil things in the future',<sup>31</sup> and he constantly takes dreams to have done this when they are in his language 'allegorical', in our language 'symbolic'.

<sup>25</sup> 'Are you raving mad, I'd like to know, or are you dreaming on your feet?' Cf. Plaut., *Amph.* 696–8; *Men.* 393–7, and see *OLD*; it is true that this usage is rare after the Republic.

<sup>26</sup> Dreams as illusions: cf. Pl., *Ly.* 218c; *Plt.* 209b; *Tht.* 208b; Philo, *Legum Alleg.* 3.226; Plu., *Mar.* 46; Dio Chrys. 11.129. Yet in Pl., *Rep.* 4.443b *enhuption* refers to a splendid ideal. See van Lieshout, op. cit. (n. 13), 104–5, on the importance of casual expressions such as the simile in Pl., *Smp.* 175e for indicating the author's underlying attitudes.

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, Bouché-Leclercq, op. cit. (n. 11), I, 317–21, on fantastic ways of interpreting numbers in dreams.

<sup>28</sup> Van Lieshout, op. cit. (n. 13), at 10–12. Cf. also Bouché-Leclercq, op. cit. (n. 11), I, 7–13; J. Bayet, 'La croyance romaine aux présages déterminants: aspects littéraires et chronologie', in *Hommages à J. Bidez et F. Cumont* (1949), 13–30.

<sup>29</sup> For an instance see Cic., *De div.* 1.57, with Pease's commentary.

<sup>30</sup> Plin., *Ep.* 3.5.4, with interesting details. For receiving instructions as the typical form of the dream that had some claim to validity see Cic., *De div.* 2.122 beginning.

<sup>31</sup> 1.2, p. 5 ll. 17–18 Pack. What in general was regarded as a propitious kind of dream in his circles Artemidorus explains in 1.3.

Hence the hurdle a dream had to leap over was not very high. This is not of course to say that everyone was easily satisfied.

There was also belief and belief. This is not only a matter of how strong beliefs were (varying from faint suspicion that something might be true to firm conviction leading to action) — though that is very important. Some may wonder whether we should be concerning ourselves with 'beliefs' at all. Wilamowitz's last book was *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (1931–32), but twenty years later, as a result of intellectual developments which do not need to be described here, Dodds could ironize about 'drawing up a list of recorded "beliefs"'.<sup>32</sup> A modern book about non-Christian religion in antiquity is unlikely to concern itself explicitly with belief to any great extent. It has become something of a cliché to juxtapose traditional ancient religion as a religion of practice, and Christianity as a religion of belief. But this antithesis has great disadvantages, including a tendency to homogenize the quite kaleidoscopic world of Roman imperial paganism. We might of course see our task as the investigation of a practice — the practice of speaking of one's own dreams and other people's as sources of genuine information. But to be brief, the view taken here is similar to that of Durkheim. He once wrote that religion 'is merely a form of custom . . . What perhaps best distinguishes this from all others is that it asserts itself not only over conduct but over consciousness. It not only dictates actions but ideas and sentiments. In short, religion starts with faith, that is to say with any belief accepted or experienced without argument'.<sup>33</sup> Yet here there is a perilous reification of belief, for anxiety inevitably made people more inclined to take notice of prophecies (cf. Sen., *NQ* 6.29.3), and might lead to hesitant trust in dreams: Pliny Junior was not sure that his client Suetonius was right to be alarmed by a dream about a forthcoming trial, but nonetheless undertook to get its date changed (*Ep.* 1.18).

Some might want to introduce here the notion of 'poetic belief',<sup>34</sup> but rather than generalize about poets I will postpone this matter until we face the interpretative problems that will arise period by period.

### III. TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES AND SUPPOSITIONS

The Greek literary and philosophical traditions were not nearly as univocal on this score as is sometimes supposed. We have already glanced at some of the Homeric evidence. The poet apparently expected a hero to believe in the divinatory power of (some) dreams: Achilles suggests in *Il.* 1.62–3 that a prophet or priest or *oneiropolos* could tell the Achaeans why Apollo was angry, 'for an *onar* is from Zeus' — yes indeed, and before long Zeus sends one that is not just hard to interpret but intentionally misleading. Presumably everyone or almost everyone knew, as Pindar did,<sup>35</sup> that dreams were frequently meaningless. And as soon as we learn what a philosopher had to say, we meet Empedocles' opinion that dreams are made up of our waking activities, *energemata*, a view which later becomes fairly commonplace.<sup>36</sup>

There was in fact something of a cultural conflict in fifth- and fourth-century Athens between those who were inclined to attribute knowable predictive significance to dreams and those who were not, a conflict which did not (be it noted) simply pit

<sup>32</sup> *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), viii. The second volume of M. P. Nilsson's *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, which had appeared the year before, still laid great stress on belief, incidentally classifying trust in dreams among the 'lower' beliefs.

<sup>33</sup> From a review published in 1886, quoted in W. S. F. Pickering (ed.), *Durkheim on Religion. A Selection of Readings with Bibliographies* (1975), 21 (but my translation diverges from his at one point).

<sup>34</sup> cf. C. G. Perkell, *The Poet's Truth: a Study of the Poet in Virgil's Georgics* (1989).

<sup>35</sup> See n. 23.

<sup>36</sup> 31 B 108. In truth this interpretation of Empedocles depends exclusively on Philoponus' commentary on Aristot., *De anima*, and may not be correct (see, among others, J. Kany-Turpin, and P. Pellegrin, 'Cicero and the Aristotelian theory of divination by dreams', in W. W. Fortenbaugh and P. Steinmetz (eds), *Cicero's Knowledge of the Peripatos* (1989), 220–45, at 242 n. 3). A view like the one attributed to Empedocles appears in *Hdt.* 7.16, and in many Hellenistic and Roman writers (see O. Skutsch, *The Annals of Q. Ennius* (1985), 376).

mandarin intellectuals against the rest. This is not the place to enter into detail. No Greek politician is known to have invoked a dream as a reason for action or inaction, no Athenian pleader is known to have explained anyone's behaviour by reference to visions in the night. Medical writers, from Hippocrates onwards, often expressed naturalistic views of the matter.<sup>37</sup> Thucydides ignores dreams, even when he describes the plague.

In *De divinatione* (1.62) Cicero enrolls Socrates and Plato among those who believed in the predictive power of dreams, and Plato made no less a person than Diotima, not to mention Socrates, put trust in them (*Smp.* 203a).<sup>38</sup> Yet Plato thought that dream-content was influenced by diet (*Rep.* 9.571c–572b), and used a dream as a figure of speech for something subject to diverse interpretations (*amphisbetesimos*) (*Smp.* 175e) and otherwise ranked dream-knowledge very low. He is also, I think, the earliest surviving writer to have seen (some) dreams as wish-fulfillments.<sup>39</sup> Aristotle put forward a naturalistic theory of dreams, while supposing that they just occasionally have predictive value.<sup>40</sup> For Theophrastus, it is the superstitious man who always resorts to a dream-interpreter.<sup>41</sup> Diogenes of Sinope — the ancient world's prime teller of inconvenient truths — knew what to think: 'To those who were excited about their dreams he would say that they cared nothing about what they did while they were awake, but got very busy about the things they imagined in their sleep.'<sup>42</sup>

More indicative of ordinary Greek attitudes in the fourth century B.C. and in Hellenistic times were the incubation practices attested for us by votive reliefs dedicated to Asklepios and Amphiaraos by people to whom they had appeared in dreams.<sup>43</sup> And we also have to consider the many who must have gone to such shrines and come away disappointed, though not necessarily disillusioned.<sup>44</sup>

The major schools of Hellenistic philosophy were divided, from each other and to some extent among themselves. It is evident from Lucretius that Epicurus offered a naturalistic view, for the Latin poet viewed dreams either as consequences of our waking preoccupations or as wish-fulfillments or as anxiety-dreams.<sup>45</sup> Epicurus supposed that the first human beings formed their notions of anthropomorphic gods from 'great'

<sup>37</sup> Hippocrates, *Sacred Disease* 17; cf. *Ancient Medicine* 10 (S. M. Oberhelman, 'Galen, On Diagnosis from Dreams', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 38 (1983), 36–47, at 36 n. 1, should not have cited this passage or *Humours* 4 as evidence that Hippocrates (that famous construct) believed in divination through dreams; there is in fact no evidence that he did so); Ps.-Hipp. *Regimen* IV (cf. G. Cambiano, 'Une interprétation "matérialiste" des rêves: *Du Régime* IV', in M. Grmek (ed.), *Hippocratica* (1980), 87–96), which, however, admits the existence of some 'divine' dreams (4.87) and is in effect a description of dream-lore, a distant ancestor of the work of Artemidorus.

<sup>38</sup> She indicates that there is at least some communication between the gods and sleeping humans. Cf. Pl., *Rep.* 9.572b; *Tim.* 71de.

<sup>39</sup> *Rep.* 9.571cd; *Tim.* 45d–46a. For some later parallels see H. von Staden, *Herophilus: the Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria* (1989), 306 n. 236. For a full discussion see S. Rotondaro, *Il sogno in Platone* (1998).

<sup>40</sup> Aristotle thought that most supposedly 'fulfilled' dreams are only fulfilled by coincidence; and many dreams are not fulfilled at all. In *About Divination in Sleep* 2.463b12–464b6 he attempts to explain why some dreams come true, his most emphatic point being that such dreams are not sent by gods. 'Nevertheless they are daemonic; for nature is daemonic not divine.' Their daemonic origin is proved by the fact that quite commonplace people [whom the gods would not bother with] have veridical dreams. Clearly he is writing against a backdrop of widespread credulity (see once again *About Divination in Sleep* 1.462b14–15). 'Even the best doctors say that one should pay extremely close attention to dreams' (*About Divination in Sleep* 1.463a5–6) — potentially at least,

they have diagnostic value, he seems to think. See D. Gallop, *Aristotle on Sleep and Dreams* (1996), for a reading of Aristotle as a dream-sceptic. There are complexities here which have to be passed over; one of them is what to do about Aristotle's acceptance of the prophetic dream of Eudemus (Cic., *De div.* 1.53); see Kany-Turpin and Pellegrin, *op. cit.* (n. 36), at 231–2.

<sup>41</sup> *Characters* 16.11. This passage should not be belittled, as by van Straten, *op. cit.* (n. 13), 14, but it only criticizes extreme behaviour, not all belief in the predictive power of dreams. Presumably Theophrastus' monograph *On Sleep and Dreams* (Diog. Laert. 5.45) explained dreams naturalistically.

<sup>42</sup> Diog. Laert. 6.43. (but he was not 'cynical', *pace* van Straten, *op. cit.* (n. 13), 14, which would suggest that his opinions were marginal — and that is not quite true).

<sup>43</sup> See van Straten, *op. cit.* (n. 13). For a general account of incubation see most recently M. Wacht, 'Inkubation', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XVIII (1998), cols 179–265.

<sup>44</sup> Here we can turn on its head a remark sometimes attributed to Diogenes, who supposedly pointed out, with respect to the numerous dedications on Samothrace, that the many disappointed pilgrims were not represented (Diog. Laert. 6.59); what matters for us is that they had hoped (and to be disappointed was not necessarily to be disillusioned).

<sup>45</sup> *Lucr.* 3.316; 4.962–1036. Which is not to suppose that the Epicureans were always in agreement with one another (cf. W. V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: the Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (2002), 102). For the view that Lucretius should be judged an eclectic on this topic see P. H. Schrijvers, 'Die Traumtheorie des Lukrez', *Mnemosyne* 33 (1980), 128–51.

images of humans they had seen in their dreams.<sup>46</sup> The Stoics, at least from Chrysippus' time, not only accepted the predictive power of dreams but attempted to set such beliefs on a philosophically satisfying foundation.<sup>47</sup> They seem to have made use of the dream-theory excogitated by the Alexandrian physician Herophilus which for the first time found a place for predictive dreams that were not sent by the gods or by *daimones*.<sup>48</sup> But the Stoics were not in full agreement with each other: Panaetius did not dare to say that divination was vacuous, but he expressed his doubts, 'dubitare se dixit' (Cic., *De div.* 1.6).<sup>49</sup>

This background makes it unlikely that we are going to find a unanimity of views about dream-prediction among articulate Romans. But is it even in principle possible to trace any changes of attitude? A marked feature of Beard, North and Price's *Religions of Rome* is the authors' willingness to detect fairly short-term changes of religious attitude.<sup>50</sup> This is obviously a procedure not free of risk, given the well-known deficiencies of our evidentiary base. But the authors seem to have concluded the epistemological gap can be bridged, and that ancient historians lose more by ignoring evidence for cultural changes than by hypothesizing their existence. That approach commends itself even more in the present case, since attitudes towards dreams are so commonly dealt with in the scholarly literature in a flat synchronic manner.

It is fairly plain that in mid-republican Rome some dreams were widely believed to have some prophetic or other informational value. We have already met the *coniectores* who claimed to interpret them. It is a mistake (rather an old-fashioned one, be it said) to suppose that because the relatively early writers who provide evidence for this assertion were under Greek influence they did not represent a Roman attitude.<sup>51</sup> Of course a play by Plautus may introduce an un-Roman situation. But Hellenization in Latium had deep roots and deep effects. The leading poets, furthermore, had public roles, and their religious and psychological presuppositions could not deviate far from those of respectable citizens. Hence when Ennius, for example, introduces the dream of Ilia, daughter of Aeneas, concerning the foundation of Rome (no less) (*Ann.* 35–51 Vahlen), we have to suppose that the broad credibility of such a story was accepted by most of his hearers and readers. And when he claimed authority because of a real or alleged dream about Homer,<sup>52</sup> he expected to be taken seriously. A character in one of his plays says that some dreams are true, but not necessarily all — 'aliquot somnia vera, sed omnia non necesse est',<sup>53</sup> but of course we cannot tell whether that corresponded to the poet's opinion, or the audience's.

Official Roman religion, as traditionally conceived, had little room for dream-predictions (see the definition of it ascribed to Cotta in Cic., *ND* 3.5), but it is not quite true to say, as is often said, that the Roman republican state paid no attention to dreams. Cicero allows his brother to claim that 'relatively serious dreams that have seemed to be relevant to public affairs have not been neglected by the Senate',<sup>54</sup> and it would be an error of method to reject this generalization because he gives only one example. On the other hand, dreams found little place among the officially recorded *prodigia*, and if the

<sup>46</sup> As we know from Philodemus' *De pietate*: see D. Obbink, *Philodemus On Piety*, Part I (1996), 6.

<sup>47</sup> In *De div.* 1.6 Cicero lists the Stoics, from Zeno on, who had written about divination.

<sup>48</sup> For Herophilus' classification see P. H. Schrijvers, 'La classification des rêves selon Hérophile', *Mnemosyne* 30 (1977), 13–27; von Staden, op. cit. (n. 39), 306–10 (he gathers the evidence, 386–7). For its adaption by the Stoics: von Staden, 308–9 (see Poseidonius fr.108 E–K, from Cic., *De div.* 1.64). Oberhelman, op. cit. (n. 37), 36, makes Herophilus out to be far more favourable towards dream prediction than we have any reason to believe that he was.

<sup>49</sup> There is in fact considerable evidence that Panaetius was sceptical on this subject: see Pease's commentary.

<sup>50</sup> e.g. I, 110, 113, 150.

<sup>51</sup> Here I am compelled to disagree with Kragelund, op. cit. (n. 2), 53. Not that his view is altogether clear,

for while he says that 'the models for this [dreams in early Roman poetry] were patently Greek', he only implies that this renders them relatively unimportant. Kragelund (though he knows virtually all the evidence) goes much too far: there were sceptics about predictive dreams in pre-Sullan Rome, as we shall see, but there were others who sometimes believed; if indeed it had not been so, Sulla's political use of dreams would be unintelligible.

<sup>52</sup> *Ann.* 5–15 Vahlen, but better read in the Skutsch edition.

<sup>53</sup> Cic., *De div.* 2.127 = *Fab.* 429 Vahlen. The exact form of this line need not concern us.

<sup>54</sup> 'Nec vero somnia graviora, si quae ad rem publicam pertinere visa sunt, a summo consilio neglecta sunt' (*De div.* 1.4). Kragelund, op. cit. (n. 2), 54 — unlike M. Cicero in *De div.* 2 — attempts to undermine this evidence.



*pontifex maximus* had bad dreams no one as far as we know was especially interested. Rank could of course make some difference, as could a crisis atmosphere: both were at work in 90 B.C. when the Senate instructed one of the consuls to repair a temple (scarcely a great change in state policy) because of a dream reported by Caecilia Metella, the daughter of a consular.<sup>55</sup>

There were other, older, stories. One told of a dream three times dreamt by a peasant which led the Senate to repeat some public games (Cic., *De div.* 1.55 and parallels). Other narratives concerned the heroic figure of the first P. Decius Mus (*cos.* 340), and Roman commanders in the Second Punic War.<sup>56</sup> Many elements in these stories probably go back a considerable distance in time, and the fact that Livy was sceptical tells us little about traditional attitudes. It is not quite accurate to say that 'the Roman élite remained cautiously sceptical about political dreams down to the second century B.C.',<sup>57</sup> because in moments of high tension their caution could be overcome. As for the rest of the population, one recalls the dream-epiphany of Neptune which Scipio Africanus described to his troops at New Carthage (Polyb. 10.11.7-8); whatever his own attitude was, he knew that his men would be impressed — again at a moment of great tension.

Yet dreams did not fall within the area of full religious punctilio, and Romans were free to employ their common sense. In his play *Brutus*, Accius made much of a predictive dream supposedly dreamt by Tarquinius Superbus, which means that such a dream could be taken seriously by his audience. At the same time, Accius knew that some dreams consisted of the day's leavings.<sup>58</sup> In the same general period, as part of his attack on the superstitious, Lucilius says that 'they' (but it is not clear exactly who he is referring to) believe made-up dreams to be true (his criticism may have been limited in various ways).<sup>59</sup>

We come back to Sulla, the man who is reported to have said in his memoirs that divine orders given in dreams were 'the most secure things' (above, p. 22). Vollenweider and others have brought out well the political use which Sulla made of his supposed dreams, most notably the one in which Ma-Bellona handed him a thunderbolt with which to strike down his enemies (88 B.C., Plu., *Sull.* 9).<sup>60</sup> There can be little doubt that Sulla went a step or two beyond any Roman predecessor to establish his authority. But it should be obvious that he could not have made such use of dreams if his audience, which meant the whole body of citizens, had not been at least partially receptive, that is capable of believing that a goddess had appeared to Sulla in a dream and given him her help (once again, it was not exactly prediction that was in question). Sulla may have had personal convictions at stake in all this: that would make it easier to understand his eagerness to add to his memoirs an account of a dream (yet again, not strictly predictive) which he dreamt shortly before his death (Plu., *Sull.* 36).<sup>61</sup> As to how contemporary Romans actually reacted to reports of Sulla's dreams, we have scarcely a notion.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Cic., *De div.* 1.4, etc. For another recent incident see Granius Licinianus 33.22 (p. 11 Criniti).

<sup>56</sup> Kragelund, op. cit. (n. 2), 79-86. Another possibly antique story: Val. Max. 2.4.5.

<sup>57</sup> Kragelund, op. cit. (n. 2), 86. H. Cancik, 'Idolum and imago: Roman dreams and dream theories', in D. Shulman and G. G. Stroumsa (eds), *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (1999), 169-88, at 170, claims that ordinary Romans often used dream interpretations, 'to the great annoyance of the official cult functionaries'. I know of no basis for this.

<sup>58</sup> *Brutus* fr. 1-2 (pp. 237-8 Dangel).

<sup>59</sup> Lines 487-8 Marx<sup>2</sup>: 'sic isti somnia ficta/ vera putant', with Lachmann's emendation of the impossible *omnia ficta* (for the reading see J. J. O'Hara, 'Somnia ficta in Lucretius and Lucilius', *Classical Quarterly* 37 (1987), 517-19). Here and in Lucr. 1.104

*somnia fingere* seems to mean 'to interpret dreams misleadingly'.

<sup>60</sup> M.-L. Vollenweider, 'Der Traum des Sulla Felix', *Schweizerische Numismatische Rundschau* 39 (1958-1959), 22-34. Whether the gems which reflect this occurrence really go back to the 80s B.C. must remain in some doubt; cf. Kragelund, op. cit. (n. 2), 92-3. Other Sullan dreams: App., *BC* 1.97.455, Plu., *Sull.* 28 (in both cases before battles). See further H. Behr, *Die Selbstdarstellung Sullas* (1993), 74-5.

<sup>61</sup> For another dream of his from this period see App., *BC* 1.105.492; Plin., *NH* 7.138 is obscure.

<sup>62</sup> Sulla became known as one of those who had *manipulated* religion, Val. Max. 1.2.3, Frontin., *Strat.* 1.11.11. A coin-type of 44 B.C. (Crawford 480/1), on the other hand, seems to presuppose that his dreams were still treated with some respect.

## IV. SCEPTICS AND OTHERS, 80 B.C. TO A.D. 100

If Sulla made a vigorous attempt to exercise influence by exploiting his real or alleged dreams, he may not have been fighting an easy battle as far as the upper class was concerned.<sup>63</sup> At least in the next two generations, say those who were born between 120 and 50 B.C., negative views about dreams were sometimes audible. We should not, to start with, dismiss the Epicureans too readily: after all, Cicero, not at all their best friend philosophically, said that they 'conquered all of Italy' (*Tusc. Disp.* 4.7). Lucretius' view, as we have already mentioned, was that the subjects of dreams are partly reflections of the subject's waking preoccupations (4.962–1019), partly (and very commonly) anxiety-dreams (1020–5), and partly erotic wish-fulfillments (1030–6). Dreams for him are among the weapons of superstition (1.102–6).<sup>64</sup> It is incidentally not correct to suppose that the Epicurean sympathizer Philodemus held that dreams were messages from the gods.<sup>65</sup>

Cicero was beyond any reasonable doubt a sceptic, at least by the time he wrote *De divinatione* (45–44 B.C.). This is proved by the fact that he assigns this role to himself in that dialogue (whereas he often leaves himself out), while assigning the more credulous view to Quintus, and by the fact that the sceptical view is stated second, the standard capping position which ancient rhetoric gave to what was viewed as the stronger argument (this consideration is virtually sufficient on its own to indicate Cicero's opinion). It is certainly of some significance that in Book 1 he gave ample space to a moderately 'favourable' argument, even though he answered it in 2 — in other words, he thought that the case was worth stating,<sup>66</sup> even though he knew that at Rome dreams had never had the degree of official acceptance afforded to some other means of divination.

Attempts to show that Book 2 of *De divinatione* does not represent Cicero's views, or does not mainly mean what it seems to mean, are to be firmly rejected.<sup>67</sup> This is not one of the subjects on which it was difficult for Cicero and his contemporaries to reconcile philosophical arguments with the institutions of traditional Roman religion, for although dreams sometimes had religious importance ascribed to them in late republican Rome, they had a far from major role. Critics have made much out of the fact that after resoundingly denouncing dream-divination at the climax of the book

<sup>63</sup> For scholars who believe(d) that the first-century élite was sceptical about divination see M. Beard, 'Cicero and divination: the formation of a Latin discourse', *JRS* 76 (1986), 33–46, at 33 (setting up an opponent). The scepticism of the historian Sisenna about dream predictions: Cic., *De div.* 1.99.

<sup>64</sup> Where, Bailey notwithstanding, I take *somnia* to mean dreams in a literal sense. Other important passages: 4.455–61, 5.1169–82.

<sup>65</sup> As claimed by C. Brillante, *Studi sulla rappresentazione del sogno nella Grecia antica* (1991), 31, on the basis of *De pietate* 92, ll. 12–15 (as edited by T. Gomperz, *Philodem: Über die Frömmigkeit* (1866), p. 43), where even if Gomperz's text is right it is a matter of *Homer's* (supposed) opinion, not Philodemus'; Philodemus' sceptical view seems to be indicated by line 1450 Obbink.

<sup>66</sup> He could hardly deny this, since it was known that in earlier years he had taken at least one predictive dream seriously — a dream about Marius he experienced as he was going into exile in 58 B.C. (*De div.* 1.59; his later explanation: 2.140). Evidently he did not have to defend the fact that he had used the *somnium Scipionis* in *De republica*. That Quintus is represented as retreating from most kinds of divination (*De div.* 2.100) confirms, if confirmation is necessary, that Marcus really did favour the sceptical view.

<sup>67</sup> Beard, op. cit. (n. 63), M. Schofield, 'Cicero for

and against divination', *JRS* 76 (1986), 47–65. *De natura deorum* 1.10, where Cicero says that his own opinions are off the agenda, is largely irrelevant (pace Beard, 35), since in that work Cicero does not in fact put much argumentation in his own mouth. According to Beard, 43, the character of Marcus in *De div.* 'highlights the underlying problems in reconciling traditional Roman practice and the Greek philosophical theory', but in the first place there was no great contradiction with respect to dreams (as I hope to have shown), and if there is anything in *De div.* 2 which is merely formal, it is the nod towards the believers (see the text). The source of all this trouble is perhaps that Cicero really was ambivalent about some other types of divination (cf. Schofield, 56–7). For a critique of Beard and Schofield see S. Timpanaro, *Nuovi contributi di filologia e storia della lingua latina* (1994), 257–64. In his view, Cicero did not write the first book to defend divination, 'ma per mostrarne la mancanza di fondamenti razionali, per preparare il terreno alla sua confutazione' (260); that, however, seems too simple. We must also reject the theory of Cancik, op. cit. (n. 57), 173, that Cicero was only sceptical about dreams because that was the tradition of official Roman religion. For another misstatement of Cicero's views see J. Le Goff, 'Le christianisme et les rêves (II<sup>e</sup>–VII<sup>e</sup> siècles)', in T. Gregory (ed.), *I sogni nel medioevo* (1985), 171–215, at 200.

(‘Explodatur igitur haec quoque somniorum divinatio pariter cum ceteris . . . Multum enim et nobismet ipsis et nostris profuturi videbamus, si eam funditus sustulissemus’, etc., 2.148–9), Cicero seems to retreat a little (2.150).<sup>68</sup> But this is merely a polite nod in the direction of Quintus (and perhaps the Stoics whose case he had presented): the Academy does not put forward its own *iudicium*, but it approves what seems closest to the truth. The hearers are of course free to make up their own minds — which does not imply that Cicero himself has not decided what to think. *De divinatione* 2.8 is clear enough: ‘si enim aliquid certi haberem quod dicerem, ego ipse divinarem, qui esse divinationem nego.’

More important than Cicero’s own views, for present purposes, is his estimate of contemporary opinion (*De div.* 2.125):

How many people are there who obey dreams or understand them or remember them? What a lot of people there are, on the other hand, who treat them with disdain and think that believing in them is a superstition of silly old women! . . . most dreams are ignored or at least disregarded . . .

This judgement may of course be socially limited, but it cannot be discarded as testimony about the contemporary Roman élite — all the less so of course if Cicero was more neutral than appears to have been the case.

We have already mentioned some of the other late republican evidence. The difficulty is to get away from the great literary texts. There were certainly diverse views — why otherwise would Cicero have written *De divinatione*? A friend of his who was an expert on divination, P. Nigidius Figulus, is said to have written a book about dreams,<sup>69</sup> and it is not likely to have been sceptical in outlook. But taken together, the available testimony suggests that the educated, even the moderately educated, did not take dreams very seriously in ordinary circumstances, but felt some suspicion that some dreams might mean something. Caesar’s commentaries are dream-free. The Temple of Aesculapius in Rome, later the site of dream-cures, is not known to have witnessed them before the second century A.D. In moments of very high tension, however, such as a crucial moment in civil war, those who were by temperament more impressionable (Cato and Octavian, but not Caesar) might feel strong emotions, especially fear, because of the dreams which they to some extent believed to be significant. Some people were also inclined to believe that particularly dramatic events, such as the assassination of Caesar, must have been foretold in dreams. At Philippi Octavian was supposed to have owed his life to having heeded a warning that came from a dream of his doctor M. Artorius Asclepiades.<sup>70</sup>

Whereas dreams are absent from Vergil’s earlier works, there are more dreams in the *Aeneid* than there are in Homer. At a vital moment, when Aeneas is in Crete, the Trojan Penates appear to him in a dream and tell him to go to Italy (3.147–71) — though Aeneas interestingly says that it was a vision rather than a dream.<sup>71</sup> Anchises appears in dreams to re-direct his son; the river-god Tiberinus sends Aeneas to see Evander.<sup>72</sup> And so on: there are about a dozen descriptions of ‘true’ dreams.<sup>73</sup> Vergil is eternally

<sup>68</sup> ‘Let us therefore get rid of divination by dreams along with other kinds . . . For we would consider it a great gain both for ourselves and for our fellow countrymen if we entirely eliminated it’. A little later: ‘Cum autem proprium sit Academiae iudicium suum nullum interponere, ea probare quae simillima veri videantur, conferre causas, et quid in quamque sententiam dici possit expromere, nulla adhibita sua auctoritate iudicium audientium relinquere integrum ac liberum . . .’, ‘but since it is characteristic of the Academy not to issue any judgement of its own, to approve what seems nearest to the truth, to bring claims together, to set forth what can be said on each side, and to leave the judgement of the audience independent and free with no use of its own authority . . .’. This does not balance the lengthy denunciation which has gone before.

<sup>69</sup> Lydus, *De ost.* 45 = fr. 82 Swoboda.

<sup>70</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1183. The earliest sources: *De vita sua* fr. 10 Peter (from Plu., *Brut.* 41); Vell.Pat. 2.70; Val. Max. 1.7.1.

<sup>71</sup> He was in bed — ‘nec sopor illud erat, sed coram adgnosere voltus/ velatasque comas praesentiaque ora videbar’, 3.173–4: ‘I was not asleep, but I seemed to recognize their faces there beside me, their veiled locks and living presence’. In 3.151 one might read ‘insomnis’. Cf. Veyne, *op. cit.* (n. 13), 389.

<sup>72</sup> 4.351–3; 5.722–45; 8.26–67.

<sup>73</sup> See H. Steiner, *Der Traum in der Aeneis* (1952), also J. Bouquet, *Le songe dans l’épopée latine d’Ennius à Claudien* (2001), 19–53, and Walde, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 261–311.

elusive — but he also puts forward a view of this matter, adapting Homer. When he re-works the Homeric theme of the Gates of Horn and the Gates of Ivory (*Aen.* 6.893–6), he seems to be speaking for himself:

sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur  
cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris,  
altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,  
sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia manes,

though we should notice that true dreams are not called dreams at all but shades, *umbrae*, as if true dreams were for the poet a quite difficult concept.<sup>74</sup> The *falsa insomnia* might be nonsense dreams, or misleading dreams such as the one that brought about Palinurus' shipwreck (*Aen.* 5.840–6). But true dreams, like the anger of Juno, must in some sense be taken seriously by the poet and his audience, otherwise the whole work threatens to disintegrate. Furthermore, it was through these four lines about the Gates of Horn and Ivory that Vergil chose to deliver the poem's sharpest shock, for a shock they are on any interpretation.

False dreams are very much part of the world of the *Aeneid*.<sup>75</sup> The phantom Aeneas who deceives Turnus in *Aeneid* 10 is like 'quae sopitos deludunt somnia sensus' (642) ('the dreams that deceive the sleeping senses'). But the poet hardly gives us a basis for describing an Augustan attitude towards dreams, let alone his own.

Let us pass on to some other early imperial writers. At Canopus, says Strabo (17.801), the temple of Sarapis is so effective at delivering cures that 'even the most respectable men' (*kai tous ellogimotatous andras*) believe in it and undergo incubation. Normally, it seems, Greek men of such standing would not trust in such places of healing. (Such places do not seem to have existed on any significant scale in the Western Empire.)<sup>76</sup> Faced with a story about a dream supposedly dreamt by Alexander of Macedon in which the latter had found a cure for the wounded Ptolemy, Strabo replaced it with a reasonable and naturalistic explanation (*eikos*, 15.733). And in his language, dream-like notions (*enhupniodeis hupolepseis*) are misleading fantasies (15.713). So the existence of useful dreams is not excluded, but the general tone is decidedly negative.

Petronius is another sceptic apparently: at any rate, one of his characters rates *interpretations* of dreams as worthless stuff, on the level of broken glass (*Sat.* 10),<sup>77</sup> and Fragment 30, like Lucretius, puts forward the theory that dreams correspond to our waking preoccupations; this text specifically denies that they are sent by the gods. Not that any of this can be reliably identified as 'what Petronius believed', any more than we can do that to the splendid scene in which Lichas and Tryphaena dream — correctly, in fact — that Giton is on board their ship, only to have Eumolpus attempt to mislead them by invoking Epicurus: 'That shows you that Epicurus was a divine man, for in the cleverest way he showed up that kind of illusion' (*Sat.* 104). It is not an illusion at all.

Valerius Maximus was able to recount (1.7) a number of true-dream stories which Cicero had rejected, and one from which Livy had partially distanced himself.<sup>78</sup> Is it date or genre that matters more here? The author of *facta et dicta memorabilia* is almost of necessity the enemy of scepticism — but just as there is a gap between Cicero and Valerius Maximus, so there is another one between Valerius and, say, Suetonius. The latter narrates the dreams of emperors, and dreams about them, in great profusion.<sup>79</sup> The Hadrianic biographer may indeed have adapted the record of the earliest emperors to fit the interests of his own times. He makes Augustus in particular very attentive to

<sup>74</sup> '[At the edge of the underworld] there are twin gates of sleep, one of them said to be of horn — and by this an easy exit is given to true shades, the other made of shining white ivory — but the spirits of the dead send false dreams this way to the upper world'. Cf. Steiner, *op. cit.* (n. 73), 90–1.

<sup>75</sup> Another reference to empty dreams: 6.283–4. Cf. *Ecl.* 8.108 ('credimus? an qui amant ipsi sibi somnia fingunt?').

<sup>76</sup> cf. the list in Tert., *De anima* 46.11. For the western evidence see Wacht, *op. cit.* (n. 43), 194–5.

<sup>77</sup> See further *Sat.* 128. Cf. Bowersock, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 82.

<sup>78</sup> The story in 1.7.3 was treated sceptically in *De div.* 2.136, and subjected to the word *dicitur* in Liv. 8.6.9. The stories in Val. Max. 1.7.4 and 6 had also been dismissed in Cic. *loc. cit.* The dream in 1.7.5 is the one about Marius dealt with in n. 66 above.

<sup>79</sup> *DJ* 7, *DA* 94, *Tib.* 74, *Cal.* 50 (nothing predictive here) and 57, *Claud.* 37, *Nero* 46, *Galba* 4, *Otho* 7, *Vesp.* 5, *Dom.* 23.

dreams,<sup>80</sup> but Valerius, who would clearly have liked to include more stories about Augustan dreams (cf. 1.7.1–2), had to content himself with the one about Artorius before the Battle of Philippi. There is no sign that the dream-predictions in Suetonius' lives of Tiberius and Caligula were invented particularly early.

In the year A.D. 47 Claudius had two Roman knights, brothers, put to death, on the pretext that one of them had allegedly dreamt a dream (though it was not agreed what he had dreamt) that predicted something extremely negative about the emperor (Tac., *Ann.* 11.4; the real reason lay elsewhere, he says). In other words, a Roman consular prosecutor could solemnly employ such a pretext before the Senate without provoking laughter — but of course there was no laughter, because authority was in the hands of a sanguinary tyrant. The fact itself that this pretext was used can hardly be doubted, whatever we may think of Suetonius' stories about Claudius' willingness to execute people for treasonous dreaming.<sup>81</sup> That implies that even in the upper social élite certain dreams were now regarded as at least significant. This in turn helps us to believe that Caesellius Bassus was really listened to at the court of Nero.

The subject of significant dreams could be debated by those who were thought of as entirely sane. Pliny's encyclopaedia, having stated that small children do indeed dream, poses the problem of predictive dreams in these terms (*NH* 10.211):

Here an important topic invites us [an interesting judgement in itself], and one well supplied with conflicting evidence, whether there are cases of prior knowledge which the mind experiences in sleep (*utrumne sint aliqua praescita animi quiescentis*), and how they occur, or whether it is a matter of chance like most things. If the two sides were to be argued from particular instances, they would undoubtedly come out equal . . .

It is pretty well agreed, he says, that dreams dreamt in certain physical conditions are empty, but sleep is simply the retreat of the mind into its innermost self. He seems to lean slightly towards scepticism (rather like Aristotle, he cannot find the mechanism that would explain predictive dreams), but allows that there are plenty of apparent cases of foreknowledge. And he is not above stating firmly that a god had recently provided a cure for rabies by causing the mother of a praetorian guardsman to dream of it.<sup>82</sup>

Medical opinion is also a matter of great interest here, and may deserve a new specialized study. There was no sharp division between Greek doctors who practised rational medicine and those who collaborated with incubation shrines, which were after all commonly presided over by the doctors' own deity Asclepius. It may also be worth considering how often ancient physicians must have found themselves more or less flummoxed by the cases before them. But we should not rush to say that a physician such as Rufus of Ephesus, of Flavian date, was among those who believed in dream divination. The most we can say with confidence about Rufus' views is that he thought that some dreams were symptomatic of malfunctioning 'humours' — which was an entirely different matter. 'I am altogether convinced', he wrote, 'that dream-images

<sup>80</sup> Suetonius says that Augustus himself 'somnia neque sua neque aliena de se neglegebat'. Every spring he dreamt many terrifying false dreams (anxiety dreams); the rest of the year, he dreamt less, and less mistakenly (*minus vana*). A dream also led him to play at being a beggar for one day a year (*DA* 91). Cassius Dio (54.35.3–4) found this last story hard to credit (see further Weber, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 325–7).

<sup>81</sup> Suet., *Claud.* 37 retails two stories of this kind, one about anonymous litigants, the other about the plot of Messallina and Narcissus which led to the killing of the consular Ap. Iunius Silanus in A.D. 42

(another version in Dio 60.14). Syme said of the *Annals* that 'not until the later books do the *prodigia* become a regular entry. It would be fanciful to discover a sceptical historian's relapse into antiquated credulities' (*Tacitus* (1958), 523). An obvious explanation is that the central figures, Claudius and Nero, and their entourages, were indeed more credulous than their predecessors.

<sup>82</sup> *NH* 25.16–18. The story is parallel to the one about Alexander rejected by Strabo. And we recall Pliny's willingness to write the history of the German Wars because of a dream.

signifying either good things or bad for a person occur according to the humours in the body'.<sup>83</sup>

#### V. AN ACCEPTED PRACTICE

There must always have been some paid interpreters of dreams (for their existence in Rome in A.D. 16 see Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.27), and therefore there must have been clients. It may not be significant that after a long absence *coniectores* reappear as a feature of the contemporary scene in the pages of Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.6.30; 5.7.36) (thereafter the term becomes quite common again). But — surprisingly perhaps — the epigraphical evidence suggests at least the possibility that dream prophecies gained an extra degree of importance from Flavian times or after A.D. 100. The texts in question (mentioned in Section I) are the numerous Greek and Latin dedications which state that they were made according to instructions received in a dream (they total about 1,300 empire-wide). A full taxonomy is still needed, but it is reasonably clear that the phenomenon has a specific chronology, which does not simply correspond to the epigraphic habit. The phenomenon seems to grow enormously in the second century: the great majority of them date from after A.D. 100.<sup>84</sup>

It is an old idea that there was a reaction towards stronger religious feelings in the Roman Empire of the second century.<sup>85</sup> Changing views about predictive dreams may at least roughly fit that hypothesis.<sup>86</sup>

Did dream prophecies gain respectability among the highly educated? Some of the evidence is ambiguous. Take Plutarch as an initial example. His interest in predictive dreams needs no detailed documentation here,<sup>87</sup> but some passages suggest that he in fact saw trust in such dreams as a mark of superstition:<sup>88</sup> superstitious people, when they wake up after a nightmare,

do not despise them or make mock of them, nor do they realize that there was nothing true in what disturbed them, but trying to escape the shadow of a harmless delusion, they make fools of themselves while they are awake,

<sup>83</sup> *Medical Questions* 5 (pp. 7–8 in the Teubner edn by H. Gärtner), after he has recounted three dreams which had nothing whatsoever to do with divine epiphanies. The view that Rufus believed in dream divination was put forward by Oberhelman, *op. cit.* (n. 37), 36, and probably derives from a rash remark in Edelstein and Edelstein, *op. cit.* (n. 11), II, 139. It is true that in a long passage of Rufus about the determination of humours which is quoted in Oribasius' *Medical Collections* there is a single account of a patient who received advice from Asclepius in an incubation-dream he experienced at Pergamum (45.30.11–13 = III p. 192 Raeder (*CMG* VI, 2, 1); the passage is quoted, out of context, and translated in Edelstein and Edelstein I, 238–9). The god's reply was unhelpful, and Rufus' interest is in what happened after the epileptic patient subsequently experienced a quartan fever.

<sup>84</sup> *CIL* VI.301 = 30731 is Flavian or very slightly later. VI.21521 is in verse and was judged to be Flavian by Buecheler in *Carmina Latina Epigraphica* p. 509 (no. 1109). Gil Renberg (cf. above, n. 15) pointed out to me that there are classical and hellenistic examples, but agrees with the view expressed above. He also confirms the impression that the deity who most often gave instructions to Romans in dreams was Silvanus (on whom see P. F. Dorsey, *The Cult of Silvanus: a Study of Roman Folk Religion* (1992)).

<sup>85</sup> cf. J. Geffcken, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism* (trans. S. MacCormack, 1978; original edn: *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums*, 1920), ch. 1; A. B. Drachmann, *Atheism in Pagan Antiquity* (1922), 120–2, and, more recently, P. Veyne, 'Une évolution du paganisme gréco-romain: injustice et piété des dieux, leurs ordres ou "oracles"', *Latomus* 45 (1986), 259–83. Yet it is not certain that the volume of interest in Epicureanism declined (cf. below, n. 99).

<sup>86</sup> cf. M. Dulaey, *Le rêve dans la vie et la pensée de Saint Augustin* (1973), 30–1.

<sup>87</sup> cf. F. E. Brenk, 'The dreams of Plutarch's Lives', *Latomus* 34 (1975), 336–49, at 347; C. Pelling, 'Tragic dreamer: some dreams in the Roman historians', *Greece and Rome* 44 (1997), 197–213, at 199. Most suggestive of all is the passage in *De Iside et Osiride* 80 (*Mor.* 383e–384a) in which he describes how the *kuphi* of the Isiacs, a complex aromatic, had the (evidently desired) effect of 'brightening and making clearer the faculty of the imagination that is receptive of *oneiroi*'.

<sup>88</sup> *De superstitione* 3 = *Mor.* 165e–166c. This seems to me to be more important evidence about Plutarch himself than are the anecdotes recounted in the *Lives*. For a pitiful dream-interpreter see *Arist.* 27.

entrusting themselves to charlatans and engaging in absurd rituals. Pliny, in his turn, seems to reflect a milieu in which dream-predictions are believed, if not much acted on.<sup>89</sup> There continued to be Epicureans, and they continued to deny that dreams were sent by the gods: Diogenes of Oenoanda is quite specific.<sup>90</sup>

The significance of Artemidorus in all this is not wholly clear. He must have had large numbers of more or less convinced informants. It seems likely, however, that his *Onirocritica* will mainly have come into the hands of a few superstitious rich people and professional diviners.<sup>91</sup> The latter will have done most of their business orally, but we can hardly say in any detail who they catered to, apart perhaps from those who were particularly superstitious or particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of fate (politicians, the sick, owners of small vineyards . . .). There is no particular reason to limit the audience to a single social class or a single region.<sup>92</sup>

It may have been in the intellectual elite that the greatest change in attitude eventually took place. One exhibit is Aelius Aristides. Another is Galen. 'There are those who despise both dreams and portents and omens. But we know that a prognosis has often come from dreams . . . I have saved many other people by proceeding from the dream to the cure . . .', so the great physician wrote (*Commentary on Hippocrates on Humours* 2.2 = XVI.222K).<sup>93</sup> Few if any leading physicians would have gone quite as far as this in preceding centuries. He had actually become a physician, Galen tells us, because of a dream dreamt by his father (XVI.223K). He certainly did not suppose that any statements such as these would harm his professional reputation.<sup>94</sup>

The first literary work of Cassius Dio dealt with the dreams and portents from which Septimius Severus claimed to have learned that he would become emperor (72 = 73.23.1). Such a thing could hardly have happened a hundred years earlier — or so one is tempted to think. It is true that behind the author of this dream-book we catch sight of the familiar figure of a young man on the make, and of the almost equally familiar figure of an emperor making the most of all supernatural justifications for his seizure of power. But this was not a random piece of servility on Dio's part, for other passages in his history make it clear that he posed as one who believed that some dreams came true (the dream-oracle of Mallos, 7.1-2; a dream of the *flamen Dialis*, 75.8.2) or gave authentic divine orders (Tyche appeared regularly in Dio's own dreams, 23.4). Septimius did the same: he famously set up an equestrian statue of himself in the Forum Romanum on the spot where, in a supposed dream, he had seen Pertinax's horse throw him and acknowledge its new master (Herodian 2.9.4-6).<sup>95</sup>

The main point here is that Dio was deviating in this respect from the classic models of history-writing, which in many other respects he faithfully followed. The opinions of the novelists, on the other hand, are largely hidden from us: contrary to

<sup>89</sup> See above, n. 31; and see further *Ep.* 3.5.4, 5.5.5-6, 7.27.12-14, though there are complications in each case.

<sup>90</sup> Fragment 9 Smith (*The Epicurean Inscription*, ed. M. F. Smith (1993)) = fr. 10 Casanova, col. vi, ll. 6-11. The date is hardly likely to be later than the middle of the second century: cf. Smith, pp. 39-48.

<sup>91</sup> The logic of Roman literacy and book-distribution, combined with the (non-) evidence of the papyri, points in that direction. Artemidorus says that he wrote so as not to 'waste' his wisdom (4.*prooem.*), and 1-3 evidently circulated among experts (*ibid.*, p. 237.18 Pack); 4-5, on the other hand, were written for his homonymous son, with explicit instructions to keep them to himself (*ibid.*, p. 238.2-6), which he apparently did not mean literally (see 5.*prooem.* p. 301.15).

<sup>92</sup> No doubt Pomeroy (above, n. 18) was right to suppose that Artemidoran interpretation had some popular appeal. Bowersock's notion, *op. cit.* (n. 10), 97-8, that 'prediction was . . . of far more importance to the upper strata of society than the lower' will probably persuade few. You could meet petty fortune-tellers in any *agora* (cf. *Artem.* 1.*prooem.* p. 2.14

Pack). See G. Weber, 'Artemidor von Daldis und sein "Publikum"', *Gymnasium* 106 (1999), 209-29, at 224-5, who, however, struggles relentlessly to overstate the size of Artemidorus' likely readership.

<sup>93</sup> cf. *On the Method of Healing by Section of the Vein* 23 (= XI.314-315K), *On the Natural Faculties* 1.12.29. Oberhelman, *op. cit.* (n. 37), portrays Galen as having been much like his predecessors in this respect, but as I have indicated that seems to be incorrect. For Galen's other references to valid dreams see Oberhelman.

<sup>94</sup> But the short essay *About Diagnosis from Dreams* (VI.832-835K) that appears in the Galenic corpus seems too mechanistic and simple-minded to be Galen's genuine work. Its editor G. Demuth (1972) concluded (71) that it was a Byzantine compilation made up of Galenic material. The emperor Marcus, incidentally, credited the gods with informing him of cures by means of dreams (*To Himself* 1.17.20).

<sup>95</sup> Herodian claims to have this from Septimius' autobiography. He also says (9.3) that 'these things are believed to be honest and true when they turn out well'.

what is sometimes implied, they do not speak to us directly on this subject. 'The *daimonion* often tells mortals the future by night', says Achilles Tatius (1.3), but it is the hero speaking. They all played on the convention that dreams could be truth-telling in one way or another, but the convention was already there when such texts first appear. The characters in all the five preserved novels quite often take dreams to be supernatural admonitions, inevitably, we may say. An actor in a novel will occasionally make a pejorative remark about dreams — Heliodorus' Cnemon, for instance, treats fussing about the meaning of dreams as a waste of time (2.16.6).<sup>96</sup> The characters commonly draw erroneous conclusions from their own and others' dreams,<sup>97</sup> and S. Bartsch has shown how, for instance, Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus employ mistaken interpretations of dreams and oracles to forward their narratives.<sup>98</sup> But the underlying suppositions about dreams may well go back virtually unchanged to the era of Hellenistic proto-novels.

It would be difficult to document any thorough-going dream-sceptic in the period A.D. 150 to 250.<sup>99</sup> Dream experiences are sometimes spoken of as unreal (Lucian, *Timon* 41), or as fraudulent (*Alexander* 49), but they are seldom treated as meaningless or as mere wish-fulfilments.<sup>100</sup> The sensible Celsus, in his attack on Christianity, could point it out as a fact that Asclepius had often appeared in dreams and assert that the god must therefore be real.<sup>101</sup> Sextus Empiricus includes among 'things which are believed in by all men' divination, divine inspiration, astrology, and 'prediction by means of *oneiroi*' (*Adv. Math.* 9.132). That does not of course mean that everyone was held to believe that all or even many dreams came true, just that some came true. Apparently we have to wait until considerably later to hear the idea, which is propounded by both Ammianus Marcellinus and Synesius, that all dreams whatsoever are meaningful, and that it is merely the weakness of humans that prevents them from always knowing what the meaning may be.<sup>102</sup>

## VI. EPILOGUE

A perhaps unexpectedly complex history has emerged.<sup>103</sup> If we say that the Romans believed in the predictive power of dreams, every term in that statement requires interrogation, and the methodological problems are severe. Furthermore, while very many people may always have accepted that a dream dreamt in special circumstances might come from a god, bringing information or a warning, or at least might be auspicious or inauspicious, the views of the intellectual élite most definitely varied to some degree from one period to another. Sceptical voices were perhaps more likely to be heard when Epicureanism was at its most influential, but Cicero was no Epicurean; in any case there was a marked difference between the age of Cicero and the age of Dio which went beyond the opinions of those two individuals.

<sup>96</sup> cf. Chariton 2.5-7; 3.1.4.

<sup>97</sup> e.g. Chariton 3.7.4-5; Heliodorus 1.18.5; 1.16.3-4. Cf. Heliod. 2.36.2.

<sup>98</sup> S. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel* (1989), 84-94. Cf. Longus 1.7-8; 3.27-9; 4.34.

<sup>99</sup> Tertullian, *De an.* 46, still saw Epicurus as a major opponent on the subject of dreams. Le Goff, *op. cit.* (n. 67), 178-82, gives an account, somewhat different from this one, of how he thinks pagan thinking about dreams developed in the period A.D. 100-250, and then continues with an investigation of what non-Christian intellectuals thought in later times (182-5), a subject which will not be pursued in this article. On the latter topic see also P. Athanassiadi, 'Dreams, therapy and freelance divination: the testimony of Iamblichus', *JRS* 83 (1993), 115-30, at 124-7; C. Moreschini, 'Sogni e filosofia nella tarda antichità', in *Paideia Cristiana. Studi in onore di Mario Naldini* (1994), 511-22.

<sup>100</sup> For straightforward romantic and sexual wish-fulfilments see Chariton 5.5.5; Longus 2.10.

<sup>101</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.24; cf. Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 7.6 ('per quietem deos vidimus, audimus, agnoscimus').

<sup>102</sup> Ammianus 21.1.12: 'somniaurum autem rata fides et indubitabilis foret, ni ratiocinantes coniectura fallerentur . . .'; Synesius, *De insomniis* 13: Penelope was quite wrong about the Gates of Horn and Ivory — if she had been an expert, 'she would have made all dreams pass through the gates of horn'.

<sup>103</sup> Veyne has written (*op. cit.* (n. 13), 384) that in general the Romans thought much as we do about predictive dreams, while considering that certain types of dreams were significant. But this judgement may under-estimate the likelihood that an ordinary Roman would take a reported dream to be auspicious or inauspicious; it also misses among other things variations from period to period.



Yet if there were changes, that raises fresh questions. How did these beliefs — if they can properly be described as beliefs at all — relate to other prevailing ideas about divination, fortune, sickness, the natural world, and the gods?

Since the general assumption seems to be that Romans tendentially believed in dreams, it might be a healthy conclusion to reverse the field, assume the opposite, and ask who had an interest in claiming that dreams often came true. Here is a brief typology:

(1) The practitioners and supporters of certain religious cults, especially but not only that of Asclepius, let it be known that a particular god had appeared in dreams with significant messages, or had sent significant messages.<sup>104</sup> Practitioners of magic in Greek-speaking Egypt, and no doubt elsewhere, made regular use of dream-prediction.<sup>105</sup>

(2) Political and military leaders and their agents often let it be known that they or people close to them had dreamt dreams favourable to their cause.

(3) The author of a fictional literary work elaborated a dream narrative in order to advance the plot, to suggest what was to come, to reveal something about the individual characters, to bring the human world into contact with the divine. It happened in plays, novels, biographies, and above all of course in epic poems.

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<sup>104</sup> Gods also appeared to artists working on divine statues: van Straten, *op. cit.* (n. 13), 15.

<sup>105</sup> e.g. *PGM* V.488, VI.47.