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With or Without Interpretation?

Dream Narratives in Greek and Roman Historiography from Herodotus to Ammianus Marcellinus*

The paper deals with the rich dream material transmitted through ancient historiography. On the basis of three examples from different time periods – Herodotus' *Histories* (5th century BC), Tacitus' *Histories* (1st/2nd century) and Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* (4th century) – the function the dream narratives fulfilled in each work will be explored, as well as their historical contexts, and also whether significant changes can be observed over the centuries. Moreover, it will be asked why several of these dreams were not subject to explicit interpretation and were seen as self-explanatory even though they contained many obvious ambiguities. These blanks were presumably filled in by the readers, and this was itself part of the narrative concept.

Accounts of dreams can be found in all genres and kinds of ancient literature: in poetry, historiography, biography, letters, even in inscriptions on stone and papyri.¹ Sometimes they include an interpretation, but not always, often depending on the kind of dream. Already in Antiquity, a distinction was made between dreams of divine provenance and dreams that were due to inner (physiological and psychological) causes in humans themselves. Whereas the former were of a prophetic nature and relevant to the future (partly not even depending on interpretation), the latter corre-

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¹ For an overview cf. Beat Näf, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2004; Christine Walde, »Traum, Traumdeutung II. Klassische Antike«. In: Hubert Cancik et al. (ed.), *Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* [DNP]. Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler 1996 ff., vol. XII (2002), 769–773; for Ancient Greece cf. Christophe Chandezon, »Comprendre et classer les rêves d'Homère à Artémidore«. In: Bernard Dieterle/Manfred Engel (ed.), *Theorizing the Dream/Savoirs et théories du rêve*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2018 (Cultural Dream Studies 2), 77–116. There are also – comparatively few – illustrations of dreams; cf. Folkert T. van Straten, »Diakrates' Dream: A Votive Relief from Kos, and some other *kat'onar* Dedications«. In: *Bulletin antieke Beschaving* 51 (1976), 1–38.

sponded to day residues and were insignificant for divination.² Moreover, the Greek and Latin terminology was anything but coherent, varying both over the centuries and within the different literary genres.³ The texts relating dreams had long been ignored in scholarship or were considered insignificant; or the interest was focused on the question of whether there had *really* been a dream as described. However, the act of writing down dreams and of using them for a certain purpose in a literary text can be seen from the beginning of Greek scriptural culture. Here are two early examples from Homer:⁴

² The systematization of dreams was a repeated topic in ancient thought. Divine providence, especially, was a subject of controversy, for instance in the writings of Aristotle; cf. Giuseppe Cambiano/Luciana Repici, »Aristotele e i sogni«. In: Giulio Guidorizzi (ed.), *Il sogno in Grecia*. Bari: Laterza 1988, 121–135; Philip J. van der Eijk, *Aristoteles: »De insomniis«, »De divinatione per somnum«*. Berlin: Akademie 1994; José Kany-Turpin/Pierre Pellegrin, »Cicero and the Aristotelian Theory of Divination by Dreams«. In: William W. Fortenbaugh/Peter Steinmetz (ed.), *Cicero's Knowledge of the Peripatos*. New Brunswick, London: Transaction 1989, 220–245. – We can find corresponding dream classifications in Artemidor, Tertullian und Macrobius; cf. Antonius H.M. Kessels, »Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification«. In: *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969), 389–424; Guy G. Stroumsa, »Dreams and Visions in Early Christian Discourse«. In: David Shulman/id. (ed.), *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP 1999, 189–212. In this context, it is evident that from the dreamer's and the interpreter's perspective it was only possible to determine the type a dream belonged to when it had finally come true – or not (which also verified or falsified a given interpretation).

³ Cf. John S. Hanson, »Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity«. In: Hildegard Temporini/Wolfgang Haase (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* [ANRW], II. 23,2. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter 1980, 1394–1427; Miguel A. Vinagre, »Die griechische Terminologie der Traumdeutung«. In: *Mnemosyne* 49 (1996), 257–282.

⁴ Homer, *Opera*. 5 vols. Ed. by David B. Monro and Thomas W. Allen. Oxford: Clarendon 1957; *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are quoted with numbers of book and verse, all translations are by the author. For more detailed interpretation of the quoted dreams cf. Manfred Engel, »Towards a Poetics of Dream Narration«. In: Bernard Dieterle/id. (ed.), *Writing the Dream/Écrire le rêve*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2017 (Cultural Dream Studies 1), 19–44, esp. 29–34; Christine Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung*. München: Saur 2001, 19–31 and 54–67, cf. there (passim) also for the other dreams in both epics; Gregor Weber, »Zweifach sind die Tore der wesenlosen Träume...«: Traum und Traumdeutung in der Antike«. In: Thomas Auchter/Michael Schlagheck (ed.), *Theologie und Psychologie im Dialog über den Traum*. Paderborn: Bonifatius 2003, 13–48, here 13–17. Cf. also Carlo Brillante, »Scene oniriche nei poemi omerici«. In: *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 24 (1990), 31–46; Vered Lev Kenaan, »Artemidorus at the Dream Gates: Myth, Theory, and the Restoration of Liminality«. In: *American Journal of Philology* 137 (2016), 189–218; James F. Morris, »Dream Scenes« in Homer: A Study in Variation«. In: *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 113 (1983), 39–54.

(1) In the *Iliad* (c. 700 BC), Zeus sends a dream to Agamemnon in which old Nestor appears and demands that the Greeks attack Troy (II, 1–83). The meaning of this dream is perfectly clear and does not require interpretation. It is used to revive action after a ten-year long siege. From the beginning, the poet designates the dream (ὄνειρος) as οὐλος, as »bringing doom« (68), but in another passage also as θεῖος ὄνειρος, a »divine dream« (23), to emphasize its credibility.⁵ The intention is reinforced by the real Nestor's exclamation after Agamemnon's narration of the dream:

If any other man of the Achaeans had told us of this dream we should have declared it false (ψεῦδος), and would have had nothing to do with it. But he who has seen it is the foremost man among us; we must therefore set about getting the people under arms (80–82).⁶

The credibility of the dream is thus connected to the social status of the dreamer – which is also emphasized by Artemidor, author of the only remaining book on dream interpretation from Antiquity (late 2nd century AD).⁷

(2) In the *Odyssey* (c. middle of the 7th century BC) Penelope narrates a dream to the returned Odysseus (XIX, 535–569), who is disguised as a beggar. Its meaning is already explained *within* the dream by a speaking eagle: The dream announces the return of the husband and the murder of the suitors. Although this understanding is also confirmed by the disguised Odysseus, Penelope still thinks that dreams are only shadows and refers to two gates – one of horn, one of ivory – from which dreams emerge that either come true or do not. She formulates this as a common human experience and expects the worst for herself – but, as we know,

⁵ The depiction of the scene reinforces the concept of divine omnipotence (*Iliad* I, 63) – because »the dream comes from Zeus« (»καὶ γὰρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν«). There is an intense discussion in ancient literature on this; cf. Giulio Guidorizzi, *Il compagno dell'anima: I Greci e il sogno*. Mailand: Cortina 2013, 217 f. On the Olympian and chthonic aspects of the dream: V.L. Kanaan (note 4), 202–205.

⁶ »εἰ μὲν τις τὸν ὄνειρον Ἀχαιῶν ἄλλος ἐνίσπε / ψεῦδος κεν φαίμεν καὶ νοσφιζοίμεθα μᾶλλον· / νῦν δ' ἴδεν ὃς μὲγ' ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὐχεται εἶναι«; English translation by Samuel Butler; <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/iliad.2.ii.html> (27.12.17).

⁷ Artemidorus Daldianus, *Onirocriticon libri 5*. Ed. by Roger A. Pack. Leipzig: Teubner 1963, henceforth quoted with numbers of book, chapter, page and line; all translations are by the author; here I.2, 9,22–10,6, quoting the Homer passage from the *Iliad* named above. Cf. Hans Schwabl, »Zwei homerische Nachwirkungen bei Artemidor«. In: Joannis N. Kazazis/Antonios Rengakos (ed.), *Euphrosyne: Studies in Ancient Epic and its Legacy in Honor of Dimitris N. Maronitis*. Stuttgart: Steiner 1999, 357–362, here 358, n. 6. There are also further Homer quotations in Artemidorus; cf. Gregor Weber, *Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike*. Stuttgart: Steiner 2000, 8 f.

she is proven wrong in the end (560 f.).⁸ The dream heightens the epic's suspense until the final return of the husband.⁹ The dream symbolism which equates Odysseus with the eagle and the killed geese with the suitors is resolved in the dream, but not explained – the comprehensibility of the images from the realm of agriculture is simply presupposed. Incidentally: Although Homer mentions professional dream interpreters at the beginning of the *Iliad* (I, 63), these do not appear to exercise their craft at any point within the text.¹⁰

The two dreams can be seen as models of different kinds of dream in ancient literature and of different ways of dealing with the phenomenon of dreaming. I have placed these two examples at the beginning of my essay because they were known to every well-educated person, and therefore also to ancient authors and their readers.¹¹ Since the dreams played an integral role in the presentation of key events in both epics, their significance must have exceeded the mere fact-based knowledge of the story's mythical subject matter. Of course, we must not proceed from our own understanding of the term ›myth‹ here – the events around Troy were, despite some criticism, integrated into serious historical chronology. Every *polis* of standing, even Rome itself, tried to integrate its own history into the Troy saga.¹²

⁸ »ἢ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι / γίνοντ', οὐδέ τι πάντα τελεῖεται ἀνθρώποισι«. Cf. Anne Amory, »The Gates of Horn and Ivory«. In: *Yale Classical Studies* 20 (1966), 3–57; G. Guidorizzi (note 5), 59–64; Benjamin Haller, »The Gates of Horn and Ivory in *Odyssey* 19: Penelope's Call for Deeds, not Words«. In: *Classical Philology* 104 (2009), 397–417; V. L. Kanaan (note 4), 208–211; Louise Pratt, »*Odyssey* 19.35–50: On the Interpretation of Dreams and Signs in Homer«. In: *Classical Philology* 89 (1994), 147–152; Alexandra Rozokoki, »Penelope's Dream in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*«. In: *Classical Quarterly* 51 (2001), 1–6.

⁹ On the composition of the entire scene cf. Joachim Latacz, »Lesersteuerung durch Träume: Der Traum Penelopes im 19. Gesang der *Odyssee*«. In: Heide Froning/Tonio Hölscher/Harald Mielsch (ed.), *Kotinos: Festschrift für Erika Simon*. Mainz: Zabern 1992, 76–89.

¹⁰ Cf. Gil H. Renberg, »The Role of Dream-Interpreters in Greek and Roman Religion«. In: Gregor Weber (ed.), *Artemidor von Daldis und die antike Traumdeutung: Texte – Kontexte – Lektüren*. Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter 2015, 233–262, here 235 f.

¹¹ Even in elementary school Homer's works were used to teach children how to read and write. This can be seen from the example of writing exercises in the Homer-papyri from Hellenistic times; cf. Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton UP 2001. The relevant texts are available online in the database of the Centre de Documentation de Papyrologie Littéraire (CEDOPAL) in Liège; web.philo.ulg.ac.be/cedopal/en (20.1.17).

¹² On the Trojan myths as ›docking station‹ for the Greek city states cf. Friedrich Prinz, *Gründungsmythen und Sagenchronologie*. München: Beck 1979; on the process of the integration of Rome into this context: Andrew Erskine, *Troy between Greece and Rome: Local Tradition and Imperial Power*. Oxford, New York: Oxford

1. Dream and Historiography

The prosaic genre of historiography, which shows itself for the first time around the beginning of the 5th century BC, is also based on epic poems,¹³ for example as regards thematic focus, the integration of speeches and the didactic and entertaining function. Later on, new elements were added, including the annalistic structuring of the material, the geographic–ethnographic elaboration and the universal-historical approach. It is not surprising that historiography from Herodotus to Late Antiquity – and also ancient biography as it evolved – contains many dream narratives, pagan as well as Christian ones, albeit to a differing extent. There are *many* dreams in Herodotus and Cassius Dio, *some* in Polybios, Diodorus and Flavius Josephus, *few* in Tacitus and Eusebios, *none* in Thucydides.¹⁴

This difference demands explanation, because we can assume that there was *not* significantly less dreaming in some epochs. That is to say: the individual preferences of a historian, his formal principles and the source material available to him have to be taken into account. The question whether dreams had *really* happened in the way they were told, that is, whether they were historical events, was hotly debated in scholarship for a long time.¹⁵ However, we cannot by any means answer this question authoritatively, because a dream is an individual event and accessible only to the dreamer. And there are no definitive criteria to even approximately determine the historicity of a dream. One can only base one's argument on plausibility and try to determine the historical context as accurately as possible.¹⁶ Nevertheless, we always have to assume that dreams were invented and made to fit a literary purpose, for instance the characterization of a person or a historical situation. What is decisive from a methodologi-

UP 2001, 15–43 and passim; Ana Rodríguez Mayorgas, »Romulus, Aeneas and the Cultural Memory of the Roman Republic«. In: *Athenaeum* 98 (2010), 89–109; Alexandra Dardenay, *Les mythes fondateurs de Rome: Images et politique dans l'Occident romain*. Paris: Picard 2010, 11–32, 41–51 and 59–64.

¹³ Cf. Klaus Meister, »Geschichtsschreibung II: Griechenland«. In: *DNP* (note 1), vol. 4 (1998), 992–996, also with regard to the origins of historiography; Beat Näf, *Antike Geschichtsschreibung: Form – Leistung – Wirkung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2010, 46–48, 148 f., 158 f., 181 f.

¹⁴ Cf. Franz Loretto, *Träume und Traumglaube in den Geschichtswerken der Griechen und Römer*. PhD thesis Graz 1957; G. Weber (note 7), 65–91. Thucydides entirely excluded religion from his historiography; on the reasons cf.: Simon Hornblower, »The Religious Dimension to the Peloponnesian War, or, What Thucydides Does Not Tell Us«. In: *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 94 (1992), 169–198.

¹⁵ A point still held by William V. Harris, »Constantine's Dream«. In: *Klio* 87 (2005), 488–494; id., *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP 2009, 91–100, cf. the review by Jovan Bilbija in: *Mnemosyne* 65 (2012), 159–163, and by Gregor Weber in: *Gymnasium* 120 (2013), 600–602.

¹⁶ Cf. in detail G. Weber (note 7), 9–13.

cal viewpoint is less the historicity of a dream than the fact *that* it was considered worthy of reporting and that an author did not make a fool of himself by doing so. This, however, does not spare us the task of appropriately contextualizing a dream narrative and deducing the meaning of dreams in their historical frameworks.

2. Examples

Let us look at three examples from different epochs in Greek and Roman Antiquity and ask ourselves what function the dream narratives had in their respective texts, what historical context they belonged to and whether we can discern any significant changes over the centuries. The selection of texts is certainly not representative, but it will give an impression of the spectrum of different possibilities and intentions for inserting dream narratives into works of historiography.¹⁷

2.1 Herodotus

Towards the end of the first book of his *Histories*, the Greek historiographer Herodotus (c. 484–422 BC), who included numerous dream narratives in his works, often at decisive points,¹⁸ tells a dream allegedly dreamt by the Persian Great King Cyrus (c. 590/80–530 BC).¹⁹ It announces the death of the king and the transition from his rule to that of Darius:

Then, being now across the Araxes, he dreamt at night while sleeping in the country of the Massagetæ, that he saw the eldest of the sons of Hystaspes wearing wings on his shoulders, the one wing overshadowing Asia and the other Europe. Hystaspes son of Arsamēs was an Achaemenid, and Darius was the eldest of his sons, being then about twenty years old; this Darius had been left behind in Persia, being not yet of an age to follow the army. So when Cyrus awoke he considered his vision, and because it seemed to him to be of great import, he sent for Hystaspes and said to him privately, »I find, Hystaspes, that your son is guilty of plotting against me and my sovereignty; and I will tell you how I know this for a certainty. I am a man for whom the gods take thought, and show me beforehand all that is coming. Now this being so, I have seen in a dream in the past night your son with wings on his shoulders;

¹⁷ For detailed reference to and discussion of the various scholarly interpretations cf. the respective chapters in G. Weber (note 7).

¹⁸ On this cf. in general Peter Frisch, *Die Träume bei Herodot.* Meisenheim: Hain 1968; on some dreams in a broader context: Katharina Roettig, *Die Träume des Xerxes: Zum Handeln der Götter bei Herodot.* Nordhausen: Bautz 2010.

¹⁹ On the historical context: Pierre Briant, *Histoire de l'Empire Perse: De Cyrus à Alexandre.* Paris: Fayard 1996, 41–72 and 123 f.

overshadowing Asia with the one and Europe with the other; wherefore it is from this vision most certain that he is plotting against me. [...]« Thus Cyrus spoke, in the belief that he was plotted against by Darius; but he missed the true meaning of the dream, which was sent by God to forewarn him, that he was to die then and there, and that his kingdom was to fall at last to Darius.²⁰

Cyrus saw himself as god-chosen and capable of interpreting the dream himself: The winged figure as a common element in the iconography of the Achaemenid kings represents »the charismatic symbol of the king, the chosen one of Ahura Mazda.«²¹ It remains unclear if the attribution of the wings to Europe and Asia made itself apparent in the dream or if we are already faced with an interpretation. Herodotus' Greek readers should have been familiar with the symbol and should have connected it to the divine *daimon* (Khvarnah) of the great king.²² Because in his dream an-

²⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*. 4 vols. Vol. I: *Books I and II*. With an English trans. by Alfred D. Godley. London: Heinemann 1956, henceforth quoted with numbers of book, chapter and paragraph, here I, 209–210, 1; »Ἐπειτέ δὲ ἐπεραιώθη τὸν Ἀράξεια, νυκτὸς ἐπελθούσης εἶδε ὄψιν εὐδῶν ἐν τῶν Μασσαγετέων τῇ χώρῃ τοῦνδε· ἐδόκεε ὁ Κύρος ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ὄραν τῶν Ὑστάσπεος παίδων τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων πτέρυγας καὶ τοιτέων τῇ μὲν τὴν Ἀσίην, τῇ δὲ τὴν Εὐρώπην ἐπισκιάζειν. Ὑστάσπει δὲ τῷ Ἀρσάμεος, ἐόντι ἀνδρὶ Ἀχαιμενίδῃ, ἦν τῶν παίδων Δαρεῖος πρεσβύτατος, ἔων τότε ἡλικίην ἕξ εἰκοσὶ κοῦ μάλιστα ἔτα, καὶ οὗτος κατελέλειπτο ἐν Πέρσῃσι· οὐ γὰρ εἶχε κω ἡλικίην στρατεύεσθαι. Ἐπει ὧν διῆ ἐξηγέρθη ὁ Κύρος, ἐδίδου λόγον ἐωυτῷ περὶ τῆς ὄψιος. Ὡς δὲ οἱ ἐδόκεε μεγάλη εἶναι ἡ ὄψις, καλέσας Ὑστάσπεα καὶ ἀπολαβὸν μόνον εἶπε· Ὑστασπεε, παῖς σὸς ἐπιβουλεύων ἐμοὶ τε καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ ἀρχῇ ἔάλωκε· ὡς δὲ ταῦτα ἀτρεκέως οἶδα, ἐγὼ σημανέω. Ἐμεῦ θεοὶ κήδονται καὶ μοι πάντα προδεικνύουσι τὰ ἐπιφερόμενα· ἧδη ὧν ἐν τῇ παροικομένῃ νυκτὶ εὐδῶν εἶδον τῶν σῶν παίδων τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῶν ὤμων πτέρυγας καὶ τοιτέων τῇ μὲν τὴν Ἀσίην, τῇ δὲ τὴν Εὐρώπην ἐπισκιάζειν. Οὐκ ὧν ἔστι μηχανὴ ἀπὸ τῆς ὄψιος ταύτης οὐδεμία τὸ μὴ οὐ κείνον ἐπιβουλεύειν ἐμοί. [...]. Κύρος μὲν δοκέων οἱ Δαρεῖον ἐπιβουλεύειν ἔλεγε· τῷ δὲ ὁ δαίμων προέφαινε ὡς αὐτὸς μὲν τελετήσειν αὐτοῦ ταύτῃ μέλλοι, ἡ δὲ βασιληὴ αὐτοῦ περιχωρεῖ ἐς Δαρεῖον«. Cf. Heribert Aigner, »Ein geographischer Traum bei Herodot«. In: *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 117 (1974), 215–218; Reinhold Bichler, »Die ›Reichsträume‹ bei Herodot: Eine Studie zu Herodots schöpferischer Leistung und ihre quellenkritische Konsequenz«. In: *Chiron* 15 (1985), 125–147; P. Frisch (note 18), 30–32; Hans A. Gärtner, »Les rêves de Xerxès et d'Artabane chez Hérodote«. In: *Ktema* 8 (1983), 11–18; Edmond Lévy, »Le rêve chez Herodote«. In: *Ktema* 20 (1995), 7–27; F. Loretto (note 14), 54 f.; Christopher B.R. Pelling, »The Urine and the Vine: Astyages' Dreams at Herodotus 1.107–8«. In: *Classical Quarterly* 46 (1996), 68–77; G. Weber (note 7), 423 f.; Hans Schwabl, »Zu den Träumen bei Homer und Herodot«. In: Chrysula K. Soile (ed.), *Aretes Mneme: Festschrift K. Vourveris*. Athen: Hellenikē Anthrōpistikē Hetaireia 1983, 17–27.

²¹ David Asheri/Alan Lloyd/Aldo Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I–IV*. Oxford: Oxford UP 2004, 215.

²² Cf. on the iconography P. Briant (note 19), 926; Peter Calmeyer, »Fortuna, Tyche, Khvarnah«. In: *Jahrbuch des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 94 (1979), 347–365, esp. 359–362, with illustrations 5–9; Astrid Nunn, »Schwingen der Macht: Geflü-

other person showed attributes of this figure, Cyrus perceived a threat and launched measures against his distant relative. On the next day, however, he was killed in a fight against the Massagetae (530 BC); later (522 BC) his son Cambyses was ousted by Darius. Accordingly, we are dealing with a mixture of clear vision and allegorical dream with a double function: on the one hand as a death dream, on the other as the announcement of a new ruler. The dream played no role in the train of events, rather it serves to point out Cyrus' hubris: He understood the dream symbol, but his interpretation of it was wrong.²³ We cannot say anything with regard to the (Persian?) origin of the material and the historicity of the dream, but know that death dreams were quite common in oriental literature.²⁴

2.2 Tacitus

The Roman historiographer Tacitus (c. 56–118) recounts in his *Histories* some events which are said to have happened between mid-November 69

gelte Wesen im Alten Orient und in Ägypten«. In: *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel* 13 (2008) 50, 40–47, esp. 45, also with regard to the origin of the presentation; Arne Thomsen, *Die Wirkung der Götter: Bilder mit Flügelfiguren auf griechischen Vasen des 6. und 5. Jahrhunderts v.Chr.* Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter 2011, 277: »Flügel werden zum Zeichen göttlicher Intervention ins menschliche Leben, sie markieren die Wirkung der Götter, wie die Menschen sie wahrnehmen« (»Wings become the signs of divine intervention in human lives, they mark the influence of the gods as experienced by humans«); moreover, numerous Greeks had lived in Persian lands since the end of the 6th century BC or were part of the service of the Great King.

²³ This can also be seen in other dreams narrated by Herodotus, cf. P. Frisch (note 18), 56 and passim.

²⁴ P. Frisch (note 18), 57–59. Another reference point is the fact that dreams were described in a personified form as winged figures – although we cannot be sure whether ancient readers made this connection. Homer, for instance, describes how *Oneiros* ›went‹ to a protagonist and talked to him (*Iliad* II, 8–36), or how Athena ›went‹ as dream figure from Olympus to Odysseus to Ithaca and back again (*Odyssey* XX, 30–55). In other passages (I, 319 f., V, 49) there is explicit talk of gods who can fly by means of special sandals; cf. Karin Luck-Huysse, *Der Traum vom Fliegen in der Antike*. Stuttgart: Steiner 1997, 5–20. There is also a notion of dreams that – somehow – ›come‹ out of different gates (*Odyssey* XIX, 561–569). Later, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, we find the notion of dreams hanging from a large elm at the entrance to the underworld (VI, 282–284), a place from which they apparently flew to their ›place of action‹, with the two gates being situated at the exit of the underworld (893–898); cf. Frederick E. Brenk, »The Gates of Dreams and an Image of Life: Consolation and Allegory at the End of Vergil's *Aeneid* VI«. In: Carl Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History VI*. Brussels: Latomus 1992, 277–294; Karla Pollmann, »Etymologie, Allegorese und epische Struktur: Zu den Toren der Träume bei Homer und Vergil«. In: *Philologus* 137 (1993), 231–251; Chr. Walde (note 4), 295–297. However, it is questionable whether this notion had existed in a similar manner in archaic or classical times.

and August 70, after the proclamation of Vespasian (9–79, reg. 69–79) as Roman Emperor on 1st July 69 in Alexandria in Egypt:²⁵

During the months while Vespasian was waiting at Alexandria for the regular season of the summer winds and a settled sea, many marvels occurred to mark the favour of heaven and a certain partiality of the gods towards him. One of the common people of Alexandria, well known for his loss of sight, threw himself before Vespasian's knees, praying him with groans to cure his blindness, being so directed by the god Serapis [in a dream], whom this most superstitious of nations worships before all others; and he besought the emperor to deign to moisten his cheeks and eyes with his spittle. Another, whose hand was useless, prompted by the same god [in a dream], begged Caesar to step and trample on it. [...]. So Vespasian, believing that his good fortune was capable of anything and that nothing was any longer incredible, with a smiling countenance, and amid intense excitement on the part of the bystanders, did as he was asked to. The hand was instantly restored to use, and the day again shone for the blind man. Both facts are told by eye-witnesses even now when falsehood brings no reward.²⁶

There is a parallel tradition in Suetonius and Cassius Dio, whose accounts coincide in that it is not the Emperor who dreams, but rather the people whom he cured.²⁷ In Antiquity, the Emperor is rarely presented as a heal-

²⁵ On the historical context cf. Kenneth Wellesley, *The Year of the Four Emperors*. London, New York: Routledge 3rd edn 2000, 185–187; Gwyn Morgan, *69 A.D.: The Year of the Four Emperors*. Oxford: Oxford UP 2006, 186–189; Barbara Levick, *Vespasian*. London, New York: Routledge 2005, 61 f.

²⁶ Tacitus, *Historiae, Annals*. 5 vols. Vol. 3: *Historiae, Book IV and V*. With an English trans. by Clifford H. Moore. London: Heinemann 1969, henceforth quoted with numbers of book, chapter and paragraph, here IV, 81, 1–3; Latin: »Per eos mensis, quibus Vespasianus Alexandriae statos aestivis flatibus dies et certa maris opperiebatur, multa miracula evenere, quis caelestis favor et quaedam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur. E plebe Alexandrina quidam oculorum tabe notus genua eius advolvitur, remedium caecitatis exposcens gemitu, monitu Serapidis dei, quem dedita superstitionibus gens ante alios colit; precabaturque principem ut genas et oculorum orbis dignaretur respargere oris excremento. Alius manum aeger eodem deo auctore ut pede ac vestigio Caesaris calcaretur orabat. (2) [...]. (3) Igitur Vespasianus cuncta fortunae suae patere ratus nec quicquam ultra incredibile, laeto ipse vultu, erecta quae adstabat multitudine, iussa exequitur. Statim conversa ad usum manus, ac caeco reluxit dies. Utrumque qui interfuerunt nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium«. Cf. Dorit Engster, »Der Kaiser als Wundertäter – Kaiserheil als neue Form der Legitimation«. In: Norbert Kramer/Christiane Reitz (ed.), *Tradition und Erneuerung: Mediale Strategien in der Zeit der Flavier*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter 2010, 289–309; G. Weber (note 7), 382–385.

²⁷ Suetonius, *De vita Caesarum: Vespasianus VII*, 2–3; Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* 65(66), VIII, 1–2.

er.²⁸ Of the two dreams, for which we can assume an incubatory context, no details are given, but only the summary notice of the god (*monitu Serapidis dei*) to appeal to the Emperor. This brevity is typical of inscriptions, of which we know only the result, but no details.²⁹ This can be due to interpretation by the dreamer or the scribe; more plausibly, however, it is due to a clear instruction by the god. The function of the report is evident: by making dreams come true through the person of the Emperor, the god connected to Egypt also connects himself to the Emperor; so it is made apparent that Vespasian can count on divine acceptance and that he possesses a special charisma. Neither is Vespasian himself labelled as a god nor does the god show himself before the Emperor, yet Vespasian represents the god as a healer. Presumably, the incident was directed at a local audience, but also stirred the interest of Roman authors, albeit with ironic undertones.³⁰ The omitted part of the text also allows insight into dealings with the dreams of Emperors. Vespasian did not enforce the worship of Serapis on an Empire-wide basis; to be sure, there were coins minted with reference to the temple of Isis in Rome, where Vespasian and Titus slept for the night preceding their entry into Rome in 71 AD, but this minting did not see any further circulation.³¹

2.3 Ammianus Marcellinus

The pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 330–395) gives the account of a dream which the Caesar Julian (331/363, reg. 360–363) had on

²⁸ Cf. also Hadrian, on this G. Weber (note 7), 386–388; also Pyrrhus, of whom numerous dreams are narrated, but not regarding his healing power, cf. G. Weber (note 7), 382, n. 102; Gregor Weber, »Herrscher und Traum in hellenistischer Zeit«. In: *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 81 (1999), 1–33, here 14 f., n. 48; D. Engster (note 26), 296 f. and 305.

²⁹ Gregor Weber, »Träume und Visionen im Alltag der römischen Kaiserzeit: Das Zeugnis der Inschriften und Papyri«. In: *Quaderni Catanesi n.s.* 4/5 (2005/6), 55–121; Gil H. Renberg, »Dream-Narratives and Unnarrated Dreams in Greek and Latin Dedicatory Inscriptions«. In: Emma Scioi/Christine Walde (ed.), *Sub Imagine Somni: Nighttime Phenomena in Greco-Roman Culture*. Pisa: ETS 2010, 33–61; esp. Gil H. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill 2017, I, 329–393.

³⁰ The reader is expected both to be sceptical and to know why and how such tales might arise; the narrator shares that mindset, but assures the reader that he has performed the proper investigative task; Christopher Pelling, »Tacitus' Personal Voice«. In: Anthony J. Woodman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2009, 147–167, here 155, n. 18.

³¹ Cf. G. Weber (note 7), 386, with references and literature, also on the Alexandrian coins showing Serapis; D. Engster (note 26), 299 f. and 302 f. Temple of Isis: RIC II² Vespasian no. 116, 117 and 204; Head of Serapis: RPC II Vespasian 2408, 2419, 2433, 2437, 2441, 2444 (Alexandria).

the eve of his proclamation as Augustus in February or March 360 and which predicted his rule.³²

But in the night before he was proclaimed Augustus, as the emperor told his nearer and more intimate friends, a vision appeared to him in his sleep, taking the form in which the guardian spirit of the state is usually portrayed, and in a tone of reproach spoke as follows: »Long since, Julian, have I been secretly watching the vestibule of your house, desiring to increase your rank, and I have often gone away as though rebuffed. If I am not to be received even now, when the judgements of many men are in agreement, I shall depart downcast and forlorn. But keep this thought in the depths of your heart, that I shall no longer abide with you.«³³

Immediately before, Ammianus tells about the proclamation of Julian as Emperor and adds the dream as confirmation of this having been the right decision. Despite Julian's short reign there is a plethora of dreams connected to him, which attests to a shared interest in him by both pagan and Christian authors.³⁴ Moreover, Julian referred to a dream in the context of his plans to rule in a letter in 359, although we cannot be sure whether this was written in hindsight.³⁵

The figure in the dream speaks so unambiguously that no interpretation is needed and therefore the dream is not annotated. Here we are dealing with a classical usurpation scene, connected to other pretenders with

³² On the historical context discussed in numerous recent biographies cf. Klaus Bringmann, *Kaiser Julian: Der letzte heidnische Herrscher*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2004, 67–82; Klaus Rosen, *Julian: Kaiser, Gott und Christenbasser*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 2006, 178–225.

³³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*. 3 vols. With an English trans. by John C. Rolfe. London: Heinemann 1972, henceforth quoted with numbers of book, chapter and page, here XX, 5, 10; Latin: »Nocte tamen, quae declarationis Augustae praecesserat diem, iunctoribus proximis rettulerat imperator per quietem aliquem uisum, ut formari Genius publicus solet, haec obiurgando dixisse: »olim, Iuliane, uestibulum aedium tuarum obseruo latenter augere tuam gestiens dignitatem et aliquotiens tamquam repudiatas abscessi; si ne nunc quidem trecipior sentential concordante multorum, ibo demissus et maestus. Id tamen retineto imo corde, quod tecum non diutius habitabo.«. Cf. Jan den Boeft/Daniel den Hengst/Hans C. Teitler, *Philological and Historical Commentary on Ammianus Marcellinus XX*. Groningen: Forsten 1987, 130–133, there also on the further appearances of the genius; Alan J. Ross, *Ammianus' Julian: Narrative and Genre in the »Res Gestae«*. Oxford: Oxford UP 2016, 156 f.; G. Weber (note 7), 218–220.

³⁴ Cf. with further literature G. Weber (note 7), 162–164, 215–218, 220–222 and 475–482 (the great number of death dreams stands out).

³⁵ Den Boeft/den Hengst/Teitler (note 33), 131, assumes that Ammianus invokes the apparition reported by Julian; K. Rosen (note 32), 170–177; recently also Theresa Nesselrath, *Kaiser Julian und die Repaganisierung des Reiches: Konzept und Vorbilder*. Münster: Aschendorf 2013, 43 f.; Sara Stöcklin-Kaldewey, *Kaiser Julians Gottesverehrung im Kontext der Spätantike*. Tübingen: Mohr 2014, 358 f.

dreams, which likewise include the appearance of the *genius publicus*, who also speaks in these dreams. The intention is clear: The state itself wants a new Emperor, and Julian, who had up to then denied this request, is exonerated in accepting it now by the religious aura.³⁶ In addition, there is no interpreter – in contrast to other dreams Julian had – but the message is self-evident by the configuration of the dream scenery.³⁷ Especially noteworthy is the communicative aspect: Julian is said to have related his dream to his closest circle – in spite of the fact that dream narratives that had been brought into circulation always presented a risk because of their prophetic potential.³⁸ But apparently Julian could rely on his confidants, who profited from the success of the usurpation and whose reactions are not further described. In a later passage in Ammianus (XXI.14, 1 f.) Julian's behaviour is contrasted with that of Constantius II, who had appointed his cousin Julian as *Caesar* and was now displaced by him: Constantius II had chosen not to share dreams with his confidants, but to consult dream interpreters instead. Moreover, whereas the *genius publicus* pledges his support to Julian, Constantius is abandoned by a *genius*, albeit not by that of the state but by his own private one (*genius privatus*), indicating his imminent death.³⁹

3. Conclusion

Our three examples represent different types of dream and of dream transmission: clear and allegorical dreams (including hybrid types, when the dream became clear due to its given interpretation); extended narratives and very short ones resembling the style of inscriptions in relating only the essence of the dream. It is hard to detect an evolution within the roughly 800 years of dreaming in historiography. At best, we can detect an increase in speaking about dreams and clearer forms of communication

³⁶ Structural reflections in Joachim Szidat, *Usurpator tanti nominis: Kaiser und Usurpator in der Spätantike (337–476 n. Chr.)*. Stuttgart: Steiner 2010.

³⁷ On the connection between emperors and professional interpreters cf. G. Weber (note 7), 115–120.

³⁸ A significantly stronger concentration of sources can be found in the context of Septimius Severus' accession to power, for whom Cassius Dio compiled a small book with dreams, cf. G. Weber (note 7), 30 f. and 204–209. Altogether, the medium ›dream‹ certainly plays an important role here, especially in Julian's own writings.

³⁹ It is also possible to establish a connection with Constantine the Great, Julian's uncle: Constantine, who had privileged Christianity as *his* religion against the pagan system, and Julian were linked by a lifelong dispute about the correct state religion (T. Nesselrath, note 35, 136–167); this conflict was also echoed in the contention between Christian and pagan historians about ›dream-supremacy‹.

on the part of the protagonists. In any event, it was attractive for the authors to present dream material. Of course, not all dreams were interpreted nor were all events in the dreams commented on. We are dealing with images that were, according to the authors, well-known to the readers – whether from literature or from the imperial self-representation of the time – so they could fill in these blanks from their own imagination.⁴⁰ In all texts, the authors only use dream material stemming from kings or emperors, or concerning them in the dreams of other people. The same limitation is true for the situations connected to dreams: the proclamation of the birth of a ruler, the prophecy of rule, the achievement of victory and the divine intervention in a battle, the exercise of rule, the particular empowerment and divine protection of the ruler as well as his imminent end.⁴¹ Real or fictional dreams were intentionally circulated for means of legitimization or agitation. In any case, they were part of the figurative principles of ancient historiography and were met with interest because of their connection to historical reality and to the dream-experiences of their readers and listeners.

⁴⁰ The question is still disputed whether it is possible or justified to interpret dream symbols from literary texts with the help of Artemidorus' *Oneirokritika*. Beat Näf («Artemidor – ein Schlüssel zum Verständnis antiker Traumberichte?». In: Scioli/Walde (note 29), 185–209, esp. 199 f. and 208) strongly opposes this approach; G. Weber (note 7) has repeatedly tried it with due diligence. It is evident that the information given, for instance, in an ancient biographical passage on a dream will never suffice to conduct a detailed anamnesis of the dreamer, as called for by Artemidorus (I.9), the more so as we cannot consult the person in question. Therefore, we can only grasp the semiotic frame of a dream symbol with the help of Artemidorus – which does not allow for a conclusion concerning the dream-symbol's interpretation in another temporal or historical context.

⁴¹ On these categories cf. the detailed analysis in G. Weber (note 7).