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Allegorical Dreams in Antiquity Their Character and Interpretation*

Summary – The article discusses the nature of so-called allegorical dreams in Classical antiquity (especially Greek). The author first surveys what kind of content and form these dreams had, who dreamed them and under what circumstances they were dreamed, what the reaction to them was and how they were understood. The article subsequently examines the relationship between allegorical dreams and dream symbols and reaches the conclusion that allegorical dreams weren't formed by dream symbols that had a constant and constantly valid meaning, but instead by the context, that is, by the situation in which the dreamer found him or herself and which the dream imagination in one way or the other reshaped. This context constituted the first and most important criterion for dream interpreters because, depending on it, the absolute majority of dream symbols changed, or could change, their meaning. Until a sufficiently high number of semantically stable symbols (which certainly didn't exist until Roman times) had developed, standardized dream-books that provided lists of symbols with an unchanging and definitively given meaning couldn't emerge.

Throughout antiquity nearly all Greeks – as well as Romans – believed that some dreams possessed a deeper meaning. They assumed this meaning because it was thought that dreams could reveal hidden things, whether they were in the past, present or future. Dreams had this capability because they were formed or sent by superhuman forces, among which the gods figured most often. Not all dreams held such significance, however, for many were considered to be merely a reaction to the positive or negative desires of the body and spirit and therefore only offered an insignificant, misleading, or illusory picture. A person who thought a dream's tidings significant and wanted to ascertain its meaning faced, then, a fundamental problem, namely how to differentiate true, meaningful dreams from false and insignificant ones. To address this problem, various dream interpreters undertook a classification process, partly to try and determine the dreams that had a proper (i. e. mostly often divine) origin and partly to decide whether or not it was necessary to interpret them.

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The best-known, systematic classification of dreams is found in Artemidorus' *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Its author divided dreams into five categories on the basis of their character and validity: (1.) the divinatory dream (ὄνειρος), which predicts the future or provide instructions for action; (2.) the vision (ὄραμα), which shows future events, especially with the help of images; (3.) the prophecy (χρηματισμός), which enlightened people about the true state of things, primarily by way of words; (4.) the illusion (ἐνύπνιον), which merely presented reflections of true realities and activities of the soul and body; (5.) nightmares (φαντάσματα), behind which stand various illnesses and disorders.¹ This classification allows for the traditional division of dreams into the true and fallacious² and gives preference to dreams with a divinatory value (nos. 1–3) that a deity had sent (θεόπεμπτα),³ but it doesn't acknowledge, or silently passes over, fallacious dreams sent by gods or demons.⁴ Also outside the interpreters' area of interest stood illusions which, as products of the human mind and body, lacked import and divinatory meaning (nos. 4/5).⁵ Artemidorus further divided the group of meaningful dreams into two branches: the first consisted of dreams (most often called epiphanic) which communicated directly so an interpretation wasn't normally required (nos. 2/3); allegorical dreams constituted the second branch, which hid their meaning in puzzles and

¹ Artemid. on. 1, 1; cf., similarly, Macr. somn. Scip. 1, 3, 2–11. L. Deubner, *De incubatione: capita quattuor*, Lipsiae 1900, 4; A. H. M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature*, Utrecht 1969, 392–394; S. M. Oberhelman, *A Survey of Dreams in Ancient Greece*, CB 55 (1979), 36–40, see 37–38; V. A. Leuci, *Dream-Technical Terms in the Graeco-Roman World*, Diss. University of Missouri (Columbia) 1993, 5/6; A. M. Vincent-Bernardi, *L'oniocritique. Rêve et interpretation des rêves dans l'Antiquité tardive et byzantines*, ΔΥΧΝΟΣ 65 (1995), 53–62 (i); 66 (1996), 69–80 (ii); 67 (1996), 17–28 (iii) and 35–44 (iv), 68 (1996), 10–24 (v), see iii.19; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley - Los Angeles 1951, 107.

² This contrast is reflected, e. g., in the traditional division of dreams into the true (ὄναρ) and the illusory (ὑπαρ), see Od. 20, 90 and 19, 547; Pind. Ol. 13, 67; Plat. polit. 278e and Theaet. 158b–d; Polyb. 12, 26c, 2; Aristid. or. 28, 1; 48, 18; 51, 31; Artemid. on. 1, 1; Heliod. Aeth. 2, 16, 3; Max. Tyr. dial. 9, 7i and 36, 1a. Deubner (n. 1), 5; Kessels (n. 1), 186–189; R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, New York 1986, 151; Dodds (n. 1), 124, n. 24. True and illusory dreams were already distinguished on a mythical level, cf., e. g., Plut. de ser. num. vind. 28, 566c; vit. Aes. G 33.

³ Artemid. on. 1, 6; 4, 3. A. M. Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams. Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Lanham - New York - Oxford 2002, 94/95.

⁴ Such dreams are also mentioned in, e. g., Il. 2, 5/6; Eur. IT 1259–1279 and Hec. 69–71; Aristoph. ran. 1332/1333; Ps. Hippocr. de morb. sacr. 1, 4; vit. Aes. G 33.

⁵ Artemid. on. 1, 2.

symbols and so, without an interpretation, it wasn't easy or even possible to make sense of them (no. 1).⁶

It is this second branch, the so-called allegorical dreams, that this article intends to study. Some of the themes that will be examined include what these dreams looked like, to whom and under what circumstances they appeared, what the response to them was, what occurred in them, how they differed or didn't differ from what are called epiphanic dreams, what was the nature of the dream symbols in them and how they were understood. Some issues, unfortunately, are so broad and complicated that it will only be possible to touch on them briefly. I have in mind here the influence of the principles of dream interpretation on the original instability of dream symbolism and the factors that led to the appearance of alphabetical dream books in which the dream motifs already had a stable meaning. On the other hand, I try to show how improbable the assumption is of those researchers who believe that, in addition to "learned" exegesis of dreams that relied mainly on context, a parallel current of folk interpretation was operating early on that tended toward a semantic petrification of symbols and the creation of lists with their fixed meanings. Although some intellectually-disposed interpreters (to whom Artemidorus also belongs) tried, more or less, to narrow down the range of meanings that dream motifs had⁷ and then, by using a small number of interpretational algorithms, deduce their meaning, they were very limited in the extent to which they could do this as they lacked a sufficient number of semantically stable symbols.

⁶ Artemid. on. 1,2 (transl. R. White): "Some dreams, moreover, are theorematic (direct), while others are allegorical. Theorematic dreams are those, which correspond exactly to their own dream-vision ... Allegorical dreams, on the other hand, are those which signify one thing by means of another: that is, through them, the soul is conveying something obscurely by physical means." Cf. also Macr. somn. Scip. 1,3,10 (transl. W.H. Stahl): "By an enigmatic dream we mean one that conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding." Or Suda, s. v. Ἀλληγορία, 1170,1–3 Adler: ... Ἀλληγορικοὶ ὄνειροι, οἱ ἄλλα δι' ἄλλων ἀγορεύοντες· θεωρηματικοὶ δέ, οἱ τῆ ἑαυτῶν θεὰ προσεοικότες. P. C. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity. Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, Princeton 1994, 82/83; P. T. Struck, *The Birth of the Symbol. Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*, Princeton 2004, 183/184.

⁷ Artemid. on. 4,65 reproached the Stoic Antipater of Tarsus for this, stating that Antipater in his interpretation of a dream motif relied too much on previously spoken or written interpretations, but partly he attempted to do the same thing (cf. Struck [n. 6], 184, n. 53).

I.

Before undertaking an analysis of allegorical dreams it is necessary to mention, at least briefly, some of the more common factors that, to a greater or lesser extent, complicate or weaken the following interpretation and its conclusions. Above all, extant dreams originated in various contexts, periods and genres, so that they constitute a rather heterogenous mix. For example, the Homeric manner of presenting a dream differed in many respects from the way that Roman-era writers of Greek novels presented dreams to their readers.⁸ Dreams had different functions in letters, novels, comedies, tragedies, biographies and histories, and very different motives determined why they were being recorded and in what form. The *literati* might use a particular dream to explain a sudden shift in the storyline, to capture the protagonist's mood, explain the protagonist's thoughts or plans or emphasize the stature and significance of the said protagonist (if the dream was predictive and involved an epiphany of deity),⁹ while the authors of epigraphically-preserved dreams could emphasize their own importance, justify decisions that they have made or fulfil *bona fide* a concrete instruction transmitted to them by the dream authority (only rarely was this explicitly stated in the

⁸ Homer: F. O. Hey, *Der Traumglaube der Antike. Ein historischer Versuch*, Programm des königlichen Realgymnasiums München für das Schuljahr 1907/1908, München 1908, 10–17; W. S. Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, New York 1918; Kessels (n. 1), 1–173; E. Lévy, *Le rêve homérique*, *Ktéma* 7 (1982), 23–41; L. Pratt, *Odyssey* 19, 535–550: *On the Interpretation of Dreams and Signs in Homer*, *CPh* 89 (1994), 147–152; B. Näf, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Altertum*, Darmstadt 2004, 37–47. Greek novel: D. Auger, *Rêve, image et récit dans le roman de Chariton*, *Ktéma* 8 (1983), 39–52; Sh. Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel*, Princeton 1989, 80–108; G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1994, 86–93; S. Saïd, *Oracles et devins dans le roman grec*, in: *Oracles et prophéties dans l'antiquité*, ed. J.-G. Heintz, Paris 1997, 367–403; M. Plastira-Valkanou, *Dreams in Xenophon Ephesius*, *SO* 76 (2001), 137–149. For a fundamental difference between Homeric and later dreams cf. J. G. Wetzel, *Quomodo poetae epici et graeci et romani somnia descriperint*, Diss. Berlin 1931; or S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford 1996, 8/9 et passim.

⁹ Messer (n. 8), 48; D. Del Corno, *Dreams and their Interpretation in Ancient Greece*, *BICS* 29 (1982), 55–62, see 55; MacAlister (n. 8), 5; Ch. Pelling, *Tragical Dreamer: Some Dreams in the Roman Historians*, *G & R* 44/2 (1997), 197–213, see 198 and 210; J. S. Hanson, *Dreams and Visions in the Greco-Roman World and Early Christianity*, *ANRW* 2, 23, 2 (1998), 1395–1427, see 1413/1414; Ch. Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung*, München - Leipzig 2001, 175–183.

dream inscriptions).¹⁰ A separate category is made up of dreams that served as propaganda for the governing elite,¹¹ and which, without of course exhausting the matter, most strongly accentuates the complicated problem of the authenticity or non-authenticity of the extant dreams. The dreams that appear in creative literary texts are in principle largely made-up and, therefore, *de facto* inauthentic (how does one acquire authentic dreams from fictional characters?), but they undoubtedly have some evidentiary value. This is to say that individual authors sometimes utilized dreams that had actually been dreamt (which we can at least suppose in the case of some historians who moved in the company of the “important” people who had dreams¹²) or that they made up plausible dreams on the basis of signs that would enable a person in antiquity – or at least a reader or listener – to believe that the dream had actually taken place.¹³ Although these signs were in no small measure the products and narrative conventions of certain genres, that alone does not exclude the plausibility of such dreams for the dreamers themselves could adapt quite authentic dream material for them, just as other people could (the extant dreams preserved in literary form are, with exceptions, paraphrased and, for the most part, narrated by a different person from the one who actually dreamt the dream), up to and including the dream-interpreters themselves.¹⁴ Much also depended on the personal attitude of the person preserving the dream: his belief or non-belief in the value of a dream, and the possibility of its fulfilment, would not only be

¹⁰ Vincent-Bernardi (n. 1), iii.21; G. Weber, *Träume und Visionen im Alltag der römischen Kaiserzeit: Das Zeugnis der Inschriften und Papyri*, *Quaderni Catanesi di studi antichi e medievali* 4/5 (2005/2006), 55–121, see 77–79; W. V. Harris, *Dreams and Experience in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2009, 54, 62, 201 et passim.

¹¹ For the propagandistic background of the epiphanic dreams of the Hellenistic and Roman rulers see G. Weber, *Herrscher und Traum in hellenistischer Zeit*, *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 81/1 (1999), 1–33; R. L. Wildfang, *The Propaganda of Omens: Six Dreams involving Augustus*, in: *Divination and Portents in the Roman World*, edd. R. L. Wildfang - J. Isager, Odense 2000, 43–56; P. Kragelund, *Dreams, Religion and Politics in Republican Rome*, *Historia. Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 50/1 (2001), 53–95, see 83–95; Harris (n. 10), 54 and 91–93.

¹² E.g. the historian Silenus marched with Hannibal’s army (Corn. Nep. Hann. 13,3) and recorded two of the general’s epiphanic dreams (Sil. FGrHist 86 F 2; cf. also Liv. 21,22), see Pelling (n. 9), 202/203; Harris (n. 10), 170.

¹³ Cf. R. G. A. van Lieshout, *Greeks on Dreams*, Utrecht 1980, 8; Weber (n. 11), 5/6; M. Plastira-Valkanou, *Alcmena’s dream in Moschus’ Megara: an interpretation in the light of ancient ONEIPOKPIΣIA*, *Habis* 30 (1999), 127–134, see 134.

¹⁴ Van Lieshout (n. 13), 8; Hanson (n. 9), 1405–1407; Weber (n. 11), 4/5; Harris (n. 10), 62; cf. Walde (n. 9), 441–444.

frequently projected onto the selection of the dream material but also into the contents of the dream or the character of the dreamer. The efforts of modern scholars to isolate an authentic core of recurrent dream visions are certainly understandable, but also unrealizable. In part this is because it is not possible to examine the veracity of the evidence of the dreamers or the preservers of their dreams (the most absurd-looking propagandistic dreams could actually have been dreamt; the most fantastic dreams of the novelists could reflect quite authentic motifs), and in part it is because the typical ways of presenting dreams generally could not only distort the accuracy of their depiction but also the very way in which they were experienced.¹⁵

Another issue that can be classified as being essentially unsolvable is the actual frequency of the aforementioned dreams, i. e. epiphanic and symbolic dreams. Certainly, if allegorical dreams comprise only a small part of the entire literary production of dreams (in which epiphanic dreams predominate), this differs markedly from now, when allegorical dreams massively predominate. If we set aside the minute possibility that the majority of allegorical dreams from antiquity were simply not preserved, this imbalance raises doubts about the true frequency of individual types of dreams in antiquity. This problem is more complicated than it appears to be at first sight and is solved by various means. One possibility is that the Greeks at first rarely had allegorical dreams and that later their occurrence gradually increased.¹⁶ Nonetheless, already in antiquity some authors had come to the conclusion that all dreams – including those in which the gods appeared and spoke – had an allegorical meaning.¹⁷ Another possible explanation is that

¹⁵ Cf. Hanson (n. 9), 1400/1401; Weber (n. 10), 78/79.

¹⁶ This for example is asserted by Del Corno (n. 9), 57/58 (allegorical dreams predominated in Egypt and the Orient; in Greece they reportedly began to gain ground, under the influence of the Orient, in the 6th and 5th centuries BC); or Vincent-Bernardi 1996 (n. 1), iii.20 and 44 (epiphanic dreams preponderated until Hellenism, when allegorical dreams began to proliferate and which then predominated until after the arrival of Christianity). Already in the 5th century BC, however, Herodotus presented both, epiphanic and allegorical dreams (P. Frisch, *Die Träume bei Herodot*, Meisenheim am Glan 1968, 59/60; D. S. Doddson, *Reading Dreams: An Audience-Critical Approach to the Dreams in the Gospel of Matthew*, New York 2009, 94). Similarly, E. S. R. Cederstrom, *ΣΜΙΚΡΟΙ ΛΟΓΟΙ: A Study of the Nature and Function of Dreams in Greek Tragedy*, Diss. Ann Arbor 1972, 54, supposes a roughly equal ratio of allegorical to epiphanic dreams in Classical Greek tragedy.

¹⁷ See, e. g., Plat. resp. II, 381e–382e, according to whom the gods never directly enter either dreams or waking visions. Cf. further Plat. symp. 203a; Achill. Tat. 1,3,2; Posidipp. Epigr. 33 Austin-Bastianini. The strongest adherent of this interpretation is Harris (n. 10), 24–90 et passim, who argues that there had been a similarly small number

such dreams were, in the beginning, only rarely recorded because they were conflated with dreams considered to be without meaning, whereas later on they gained more attention.¹⁸

These hypotheses, however, are based on data that are heterogeneous, incomplete and not very reliable. Though there is not a single symbolic dream among the 700 or so epigraphically recorded dreams to be found in Greece,¹⁹ we cannot automatically consider all of them to be epiphanic, since they do not (with some exceptions) reveal their content. To the extent that epiphanic dreams prevailed in literary works, it could have been because the author considered such dreams to be more clear-cut, to carry greater significance or to be more dramatic, thereby fitting better into the author's dramatic or comedic framework. In addition, some authors have on occasion interpreted symbolic dreams as being epiphanic²⁰ or, contrarily, have confused epiphanic dreams with symbolic ones.²¹ The possibility therefore arises that such mistakes have also impacted other accounts and classifications of dreams, though this cannot be proven.

If we leave out Artemidorus' book, which specialized in the interpretation of dream allegories, surprisingly little survives of ancient Greek symbolic dreams. Homer presents precisely one such dream,²² the inscriptions brought

of truly epiphanic dreams in antiquity as there has been in other times and cultures, and that allegorical dreams must have therefore predominated.

¹⁸ This could be suggested by the relatively high occurrence of symbolic dreams in the Greek novel or in Plutarch (cf. W. K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War III*, Berkeley - Los Angeles - London 1979, 96). Messer (n. 8), 33 n. 105, and 34, concludes that the small number of recorded allegorical dreams is a reflection of the fact that it was difficult at first to integrate them into literary works, a barrier that wasn't breached until tragedy. Epiphanic dreams, however, predominated as much in the tragedies that have been preserved as in later literature.

¹⁹ See especially Leuci (n. 1) and G. H. Renberg, "Commanded by the Gods": An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life, Diss. Duke University 2003.

²⁰ Cf. Philostr. vit. Apoll. 1, 23: the thaumaturge Apollonius dreamed that he saw fish stuck on the shore who beseeched a dolphin for rescue, whereupon he identified the fish with Eretrians and the dolphin with himself; therefore, he concluded that the gods had "commanded him to care for the Eretrians", though no deity figured in his dream.

²¹ Cf. Xen. anab. 3, 1, 11/12: see below; or Artemid. on. 4, 71 and 5, 9; 5, 72; 5, 89 and 5, 92 (in the dreams, the appearances and utterances of the gods are understood to be symbolic). Van Lieshout (n. 13), 210.

²² Od. 19, 535–550: see below. Hey (n. 8), 15 considers this dream to be a late, non-Homeric interpolation; however, the dreams of Polyidus and Abas could also be understood as allegorical because their father, though a dream interpreter, didn't succeed in interpreting them (Il. 5, 150); indeed, if the dreams were wholly transparent there would

about by dreams don't contain any symbols, nor are they especially to be found in literary works. Among the nearly six hundred dreams from Greek literature that I studied,²³ nearly sixty were allegorical in nature.²⁴ This number obviously serves only for orientation, because I didn't include variants and later responses, the dreams of Aelius Aristides (whose symbolical character is often unclear or debatable),²⁵ the symbolic dream motifs from the fourth book of the Hippocratic treatise *De diaeta*, as its author relates the dream scenes in a rather typological manner and prototypically, without presenting the concrete dreams and linkages of particular motifs to the symptoms of a specific illness.²⁶ The dreams of Latin or Christian

not be any need for an interpretation (cf. Schol. in Il. 5, 150: "In one (of those dreams) there was as a matter of fact something ambiguous."). Dodds (n. 1), 106, n. 22.

²³ A complete listing of extant literary dreams has yet to be done (and therefore, also, the total number of such dreams is not known), but very helpful are the partial listings of, especially, van Lieshout (n. 13), 252–262 (a listing of more than 200 passages concerning dreams from the earliest times up to the beginnings of Hellenism); G. Weber, Kaiser, Träume und Visionen in Prinzipat und Spätantike, Stuttgart 2000, 576–585 (a list of passages that primarily touch on the dreams of rulers); Walde (n. 9), 434–456 (a general index of ancient dream motifs, characters, places, and the like). The titles listed in my bibliography also contain references to the number of extant dreams.

²⁴ Od. 19, 535–550; Eur. IT 42–64; Stesich. fr. 219 Campbell; Aesch. Choeph. 527–533, 549/550, 928 and Pers. 176–230; Pind. paean 8, 28–33; Soph. El. 417–423; Eur. Hec. 90/91 and IT 42–45; Ps. Eur. Rhes. 780–786; Herodot. 1, 107 (bis); 1, 209; 3, 30; 3, 64; 3, 125/126; 6, 106–108 and 7, 19; Aristoph. vesp. 31–36; Xen. anab. 3, 1, 11–13 and perhaps also 4, 3, 8; Heraclid. Pont. fr. 132 Wehrli; Dinon FHG II, 91, fr. 10; Chrysipp. SVF II, 344, fr. 1201; Apoll. Rhod. Arg. 4, 1732–1757; Sil. FGrHist 86 F 2; Mosch. 2, 6–17 and 4, 91–125; UPZ I, 77, 1–17 and 79, 17–20 (mid-2nd cent. BCE); Plaut. Merc. 225–254 (the source was Philemon); Plut. Lucull. 10, 2/3 and 12, 2, Cor. 24, 2–25, 2, Eum. 6, 4–7, Cim. 18, 2/3, Alc. 39, 2/3, Caes. 32, 9, Alex. 2, 3–5 (bis) and 18, 4/5, Pyrrh. 29, 2–4, Ant. 16, 3/4 and de gen. Socr. 17, 587a; Paus. 1, 30, 3; 4, 13, 2–4; 4, 26, 3; 5, 21, 11 and 10, 2, 6; Ael. fr. 11 Hercher; Philostr. vit. Apoll. 1, 23 and 4, 34; App. Mithr. 9, 27/28 and Cart. 136, 645; Dio Cass. 67, 16, 1 and 69, 2, 1; Diog. Laërt. 3, 5; Achill. Tat. 1, 3, 3/4; Heliod. Aeth. 4, 14, 2–4, 15, 1; Xen. Eph. 2, 8, 2. Cf. van Lieshout (n. 13), 208–211 (only for the Archaic and Classical Periods); Hanson (n. 9), 1412, n. 71; Del Corno (n. 9), 57/58; R. K. Grusec, Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus. A Traditio-Historical Analysis, Leiden - New York - Köln 1996, 110/111.

²⁵ The problem results from the fact that also Aristides often symbolically interpreted dreams which seemed to be epiphanic (see, e. g., or. 47, 51/52 and or. 50, 21) or, from evidently symbolic dreams, he rendered them epiphanic or medical (see or. 49, 21/22; 47, 54–56). Cf. Ch. A. Behr, Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales, Amsterdam 1968, 190–195; A.-J. Festugière, Personal Religion among the Greeks, Westport 1984, 98, 101/102.

²⁶ Van Lieshout (n. 13), 189; A. M. Holowchak, Interpreting Dreams for Corrective Regimen: Diagnostic Dreams in Greco-Roman Medicine, Journal of History of Medicine

provenance, whose allegorical nature is to a greater or lesser degree debatable,²⁷ were also omitted.²⁸

II.

No impermeable borders separated epiphanic and allegorical dreams; to the contrary, one can observe their mingling and mutual borrowing of characteristic elements. When, for example, Mithridates besieged Cyzicus, Plutarch relates that the following occurred (Lucull. 10, 2/3, transl. B. Perrin, LCL):

“And, again, the goddess appeared in a dream (ὄναρ δ’ ἡ θεός ... παραστᾶσα) to Aristagoras, the town-clerk, saying: ‘Lo, here am I, and I bring the Libyan fifer against the Pontic trumpeter. Bid the citizens therefore be of good cheer.’ While the Cyzicenes were lost in wonder at the saying, at day-break the sea began to toss under a boisterous wind, and the siege-engines of the king along the walls, the wonderful works of Niconides the Thessalian, by their creaking and cracking showed clearly what was about to happen; then a south wind burst forth with incredible fury, shattered the other engines in a short space of time, and threw down with a great shock the wooden tower a hundred cubits high.”

In this case, Athena appears and speaks precisely as she would in an epiphanic dream, but her prophecy is symbolical: by the Pontic trumpeter the goddess means King Mithridates, and by the Libyan fifer she means the strong south wind which breached the king’s sea blockade and destroyed his siege-machines.

Other speeches by dream apparitions look quite similar, especially when they are in verse. For example, a dream apparition delivered the slightly modified Homeric verse “On the third day thou wouldst come to fertile Phthia” (transl. H. N. Fowler, LCL) to Socrates three days before his execu-

56 (2001), 382–399, see 393; Ph. J. van der Eijk, *Divination, Prognosis and Prophylaxis: The Hippocratic Work “On Dreams” (De victu 4) and its Near Eastern Background*, in: *Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Graeco-Roman Medicine*, edd. H. F. J. Horstmanshoff-M. Stol, Leiden 2004, 187–218, see 201/202.

²⁷ E. g., of the 37 examples from Greece and Rome that Gnuse (n. 24), 110/111, presents, at least four of the dreams are most likely not allegorical.

²⁸ For symbolic dreams from a Latin milieu see, e. g., Accius Brut. fr. 1/2 Dangel; Apul. met. 4, 27; Suet. Cal. 57, 3, Otho 72, Vesp. 25, 1, Dom. 15, 3 and 23, 2; Tac. ann. 2, 14, 1 (Germanicus); Dio Cass. 67, 16, 1 (Domitianus), 69, 2, 1 (Hadrianus), 72, 36, 1 (Marcus Aurelius) and 73, 7, 1 (Sextus). For Christian dreams see Gnuse (n. 24), 111; C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary I: Introduction and 1, 1/2, 47*, Grand Rapids 2012, 911–916.

tion.²⁹ In Homer, Achilles used these words when he announced his decision to sail home as a result of his quarrel with Agamemnon. The import of this dream message rests in the idea that one's true home lies outside of this world and that death is the only portal to it.

Because this 'hidden' meaning of this dream obviously conforms to the philosophical opinion of Plato, who recorded or invented it, the issue of its authenticity naturally arises. Many of these allegorical dreams are marked by a clear stylization, i.e. by the stronger presence of various narrative conventions including, for example, authority figures (primarily gods and legendary heroes) appearing as young, beautiful, noble and superhumanly tall figures, clothed in a gorgeous and radiant (and, as a rule, white) robe;³⁰ the belief that the destiny and character traits of those who are to become significant personages are dreamt of by their mothers while still pregnant with them (see below); or the conviction that these significant personalities can, from their dreams, learn of their impending deaths³¹ (intermingled with this is the convention that just before a person dies he or she can accurately predict the future³²). The stylization of a dream, however, need not be detrimental to its plausibility. Artemidorus, for example, did not consider the presence of stylization to be a mark of the falseness of a dream, but its measure: excessively symbolic or enigmatic dreams interspersed with inscrutable verses he held to be untrustworthy, although some examples cited

²⁹ Plat. Crit. 44a/b; cf. Il. 9,363. Cf. R. Weiss, *Socrates dissatisfied. An analysis of Plato's Crito*, New York - Oxford 1998, 54. A detailed analysis of the dream was realized by M.-L. von Franz, *The Dream of Socrates*, in: *Dreams: A Study of the Dreams of Jung, Descartes, and other historical Figures*, M.-L. von Franz (ed.), Boston - London 1991, but her interpretation is so unhistorical that it is almost unusable.

³⁰ See Od. 13,288/289; Aesch. Pers. 181–185; Xen. Cyr. 8,7,2; Herodot. 5,56 and 7,12; Ps. Hippocr. epist. 15; IPriene 1094 (4th cent. BC); Plut. Sull. 17,3 and de def. orac. 45, 434e; Longus 2,23,1; Philostr. vit. Apoll. 4,34; Aristid. or. 50,60; Past. Herm. 2,2 and 23,1; Plin. Jun. epist. 7,27,2; Ennius ap. Cic. div. 1,20,40; Tac. hist. 4,83; Lucian. epist. 2; PLM XLI,809; Pontius, vit. Cypr. 12,3; Martyrium Sabae 4,1. Van Lieshout (n. 13), 15; Lane Fox (n. 2), 153–163; Vincent-Bernardi 1996 (n. 1), iii,21; Hanson (n. 9), 1410, n. 64; Plastira-Valkanou (n. 8), 139/140.

³¹ Herodot. 5,56; Xen. Cyr. 8,7,2; Plat. Crit. 44a; Arist. fr. 37a Rose; Plut. Cim. 6,4, Dio 2,3–5, Alc. 39,1/2, Sull. 37,2 and Brut. 20,9; Plin. Jun. epist. 5,5,5–7; 7,27,3; App. bell. civ. 1,105. Cf. F.E. Brenk, *The Dreams of Plutarch's Lives*, *Latomus* 34 (1975), 336–349, see 338, n. 6; Doddson (n. 16), 88,91,95; Keener (n. 28), 914, n. 580.

³² Arist. fr. 10 Rose; Xen. Cyr. 8,7,21; Cic. div. 1,30,64. W.R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*, London 1913, 202/203; A.S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De divinatione liber primus et secundus*, Vol. I/II, The University of Illinois, 1920–1923, I,206/207, 368/369; Brenk (n. 31), 338.

by him testify both to the popularity and frequent nature of such dreams and to the arbitrariness of the measure of their stylization.³³

In any case, the stylization of a dream is a rather two-edged criterion. On the one hand, many symbolic dreams resemble – at least in their central passages – the predictions in literature (typically the Delphic ones), which likewise were characterized by a spectrum of narrative conventions (albeit not an entirely identical one as that which characterized literary dreams).³⁴ The characters in these dreams speak in a higher, more formal speech (often versified) and, with pleasure, make use of symbols, allusions and ambiguities.³⁵ On the other hand, the above-mentioned expectation that gods and various superhuman creatures should have a certain exalted appearance or speech could well evoke such dreams even outside the realm of the *literati*'s imagination.

Let us take a look at some examples. In Lucullus' epiphanic dream, Aphrodite, in verse, beckons a lion to hunt some deer, where by "lion" she means the ruler – that is, Lucullus himself – and by "deer" an enemy ship which he intended to destroy.³⁶ In the epiphanic dream of the bandit chief Thyamis, the goddess Isis announces to him, in the form of a highly ambiguous prophecy, the destiny of his love.³⁷ The amorous couple Chariclea and Theagenes hear a strongly stylized and gloomy prophecy in the form of an elegiac distich from a godly wise man.³⁸ A verse delivered in a dream by an unknown personage repeatedly terrifies the military leader Marius.³⁹ In a dream, the philosopher Aedesius hears seven somewhat opaque, divinatory hexameters from Apollo.⁴⁰

These dreams appear relatively plausible, but how deceptive such an impression can be is shown by the very frequent occurrence of stylized symbolic figures, which likely function as a literary ornament, as a sign of a certain genre (biography, hagiography) or the aforementioned narrative conventions. Above all, it is in this area that the dreams of pregnant women belong, which symbolically foretell the future character and fate of their

³³ Cf. Artemid. on. 4, 63.

³⁴ Cf. J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1978, 166–195; Struck (n. 6), 187; Doddson (n. 16), 90; MacAlister (n. 8), 12.

³⁵ Examples are presented by W.V. Harris, *Roman Opinions about the Truthfulness of Dreams*, JRS 93 (2003), 18–34, see 22, and Brenk (n. 31), 342.

³⁶ Plut. Lucull. 12, 2.

³⁷ Heliod. Aeth. 1, 18, 4. Cf. Bartsch (n. 8), 94/95.

³⁸ Heliod. Aeth. 8, 11, 1–4.

³⁹ Plut. Mar. 45, 6. Brenk (n. 31), 340.

⁴⁰ Eunap. vit. soph. Aed. 6, 4, 1–5.

sons. Reportedly, it was in this way that the Trojan queen Hecuba beheld her still unborn son Paris as the flaming Erinys with a hundred limbs who destroyed the city (the Trojan city-state fell because of Paris' kidnapping of Helen); Agariste saw her son Pericles as a lion (i. e. as the leader and defender of Athens); Phalaris' mother dreamed of a statue of Hermes pouring out blood, which started to boil and filled the entire home with blood (her son became a bloodthirsty tyrant); in a dream, the mother of the enlightened ruler Dionysius gave birth to a small satyr (her son should become famous and stand out with the constancy of good fortune); Olympias dreamed that a bolt of lightning struck her in the womb (i.e. the future conqueror, her divine son Alexander); Atia, mother of the future emperor Octavian, dreamed during her pregnancy of "her viscera rising to the stars and being stretched across the whole circumference of the earth and sky".⁴¹

A variation of the same thing is called to mind by dreams that the fathers-to-be were having. Philip of Macedon dreamed that he pressed a seal with the figure of a lion on it to the belly of his pregnant wife (i. e. he had conceived with her a lion's son with the character of a ruler); Astyages had a dream that a vine was growing from the womb of his pregnant daughter which spread across the whole of Asia (i. e. the vine = Cyrus, the future ruler of the empire); Octavian's father dreamed that from his wife's womb the sun's rays would spill out (i. e. the future imperial power); Carcinus of Rhegium fretted over his dreams about his son Agathocles (i. e. a future tyrant), in which he became a calamity for the Phoenicians and for the whole

⁴¹ Hecuba: Pind. paeon 8,28–33 (cf. Ennius ap. Cic. div. 1,22,42: burning torch; Verg. Aen. 7,320: a flame generating a conflagration; Lycophr. Alex. 86: a winged fire; about the influence of this dream on other occurrences of the same motif cf. F. Lanzoni, *Il sogno presago della madre incinta nella letteratura medievale e antica*, *Analecta Bollandiana* 45 [1927], 225–261, see 255/256). – Pericles' mother: Herodot. 6,131. – Phalaris' mother: Heraclid. Pont. fr. 132 Wehrli. – Dionysius' mother: Philist. FHG I,190, fr. 47. – Olympias: Plut. Alex. 2,3 (G. W. Dyson, *ΛΕΟΝΤΑ τεκεῖν*, CQ 23,3/4 [1929], 186–195, see 191/192). – Octavian's mother: Suet. Aug. 94; Dio Cass. 40,1,2 (Wildfang [n. 11], 44–48). – Cf. further Euphorion, fr. 45 Meineke = fr. 183 van Groningen (before giving birth to him, Seleucus' mother Laodice dreamed that he would become the ruler of Asia); Philostr. vit. Apoll. 1,4 (the god Proteus appeared to Apollonius' mother before she gave birth and told her that she would bear Proteus himself); Hist. Aug., Comm. 1,3/4 (Faustina, Commodus' mother, dreamed during her pregnancy that she would bear two aggressive snakes); Suet. Verg. 3–5 (Virgil's mother dreamed about giving birth to laurel sprigs). Further examples are presented by Lanzoni 225–261; Weber (n. 11), 20; Kragelund (n. 11), 55, n. 8; cf. also Doddson (n. 16), 95; and MacAlister (n. 8), 9.

of Sicily.⁴² It is also possible to freely assign to this same group the dreams of the teachers that touch upon the character and future fates of their students. Socrates, for example, before his first meeting with Plato, reportedly dreamed that he had a young swan on his knee that “suddenly fledged and, with a pleasant song, flew away”.⁴³

III.

From all of the examples that have been presented here, it seems relatively clear why ancient dream interpreters called such dreams allegorical or enigmatic and not symbolic (see above). Their interpretation is predominately enabled by their context, which is concealed by various analogies and associations that are created *ad hoc* and which are only minimally transferable to a different dream.⁴⁴ Or more precisely: the above dreams share – and in that sense also transmit – a common principle (i. e. the belief that an allegorical dream can, before a descendant is born or a tutelage begins, foretell their subject’s future character and fate), but its concrete fulfilment (that is, the meaning of each dream symbol) isn’t usually transferable to other cases. For example, to dream about the flaming Erinyes with a hundred limbs did not always signify to all the birth of one who would destroy the his or her city-state, although in general the epiphany of Erinyes carried a negative meaning.⁴⁵ Similarly, a dream about a small satyr was no guarantee of future good fortune and bliss as it was for the ruler Dionysius I, for, according to Artemidorus, a dream about it prophesized upheaval, danger and calumny.⁴⁶ Generally speaking, allegorical dreams

⁴² Philippus: Ephor. FGrHist 70 F 217; Plut. Alex. 2,4/5; [Callisthenes] Hist. Alex. Magn., rec. A 1,8,2; Eustath. in Dionys. Perieg. 254; Steph. Byz. ethn. 70,19–21, s. v. Ἀλεξάνδρειαί πόλεις (Dyson [n. 41], 191). – Astyages: Herodot. 1,107 (Frisch [n. 16], 6–11; Ch. Pelling, The Urine and the Wine: Astyages’ Dreams at Herodotus I, 107/108, CQ 46/1 [1996], 68–77; Doddson [n. 16], 87/88). – Octavianus: Suet. Aug. 94; Dio Cass. 45,1,1 (Lanzoni [n. 41], 229; Wildfang [n. 11], 46). – Carcinus: Diod. Sic. 19,2,2–7. – This type of dream also circulated in nonsymbolic versions: for example, the father of the future king Sesosios had a dream in which, at his son’s birth, the god Hephaestus revealed to him that the boy would become the ruler of the whole world (Diod. Sic. 1,53,9).

⁴³ Diog. Laërt. 3,5; Apul. de Plat. 1,1. A. S. Riginos, Platonica: The Anecdotes concerning the Life and Writings of Plato, Leiden 1976, 21–24 and 54/55; Miller (n. 6), 44.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hanson (n. 9), 1413; G. Weber, Traum und Alltag in hellenistischer Zeit, ZRGG 50 (1998), 22–39, see 32/33.

⁴⁵ Artemid. on. 2,39.

⁴⁶ Artemid. on. 2,37.

contain only an absolute minimum of semantically stable symbols (i.e. motifs whose meaning or meanings always meant the same thing for, more or less, everybody in a similar context), and that is most likely because Greek civilization for quite a long time offered a surprisingly small number of them. This conclusion is confirmed both by the allegorical interpretations – whose authors attempted to unveil and stabilize the putatively ambiguous or hidden meanings, even if for a considerable period of time they did so in their own, personal fashion⁴⁷ – and the literarily-preserved Delphic oracles (especially those of Herodotus), in which some number of not particularly self-evident symbols or allegories occurred which were quite incomprehensible without a detailed knowledge of a milieu, a deep-seated knowledge of all the linguistic possibilities and superior intuition. Sometimes even these weren't enough and the meaning of an oracle was only revealed after a discussion among the interpreters or even after it came true.⁴⁸

An example of a symbol whose meaning was relatively clear and stable throughout antiquity is the lion. It was generally a symbol that represented a ruler⁴⁹ or a brave, combative and never quite tameable man; it also denoted victory and protection.⁵⁰ These meanings nevertheless were not established because of dreams and their interpreters, as they had already existed independently of dreams. This is especially evident in the linkage between lions and rulers.⁵¹ For us, the occurrence of a lion in some divinations that contain symbolic elements is especially interesting.⁵² Yet, even the penetration of the

⁴⁷ Cf. Miller (n. 6), 75, 80–82, 91–105; S. Blossom, *Reading Revelation: Allegorical Exegesis in Late Antique Alexandria*, *RHR* 224/2 (2007), 231–251, see 233–238.

⁴⁸ G. Manetti, *Theories of the Sign in Classical Antiquity*, Bloomington - Indianapolis 1993, 24–27, 33–35. Cf. also J.-P. Vernant, *Parole et signes muets*, in: *Divination et rationalité*, ed. J.-P. Vernant, Paris 1974, 8–25, see 10, 12, 19/20, 22–23.

⁴⁹ Cf. Herodotus 4, 93 (Cypselus), 5, 56 (Hipparchus), 6, 131 (Pericles); Aristoph. eq. 1037/1038 (a ruler, probably Themistocles); Plut. *Mar.* 45, 5 (Marius), *Alex.* 73, 6 (Alexander of Macedon); Dio Cass. 72, 7, 1 (Commodus); Artemid. *on.* 2, 12 (Caesar); Amm. Marc. 23, 5, 8 (Persian king).

⁵⁰ The references are from Dyson (n. 41), 186–191. Nonetheless, Holowchak (n. 3), 100, rightfully points out that according to Artemidorus this symbol wasn't stable in its content because it carried altogether nine possible meanings from which some were not at all self-evident as, for example, “fear”, “illness” or “fire” (Artemid. *on.* 2, 12).

⁵¹ Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1284: “cowardly lion” = Aegisthus as the ruler of Mycenae; Eur. *Phoen.* 1570–1573: the mother called her sons “lions”; [Eur.] *Rhes.* 381: the beautiful lion from Thrace = Rhesus.

⁵² Herodot. 5, 92, 2: the prophecy from Delphi termed the unborn Cypselus a lion, by which was foretold his rule over Corinth; Herodot. 7, 220: the prophecy from Delphi predicted

symbol into the divinatory “metaphors” does not guarantee that, in its main meaning, it will be understood by everybody. An example is the epiphanic dream of the Athenian autocrat Hipparchus, who despite the commonly known symbolic value attributed to the lion did not understand that the ill-boding dream prediction pertained to him (transl. A. D. Godley, LCL):⁵³

“Now this was the vision which Hipparchus saw in a dream: in the night before the Panathenaea he thought that a tall and goodly man stood over him uttering these riddling verses: ‘Bear an unbearable lot; O lion, be strong for the bearing; No man on earth doth wrong but at last shall suffer requital.’ As soon as it was day, he imparted this (as was seen) to the interpreters of dreams; and presently putting the vision from his mind, he led the procession in which he met his death.”

With other symbols that appear in allegorical dreams, Hipparchus might have had a better chance. The wolf, for example, for centuries represented an unrepentant thief and murderer.⁵⁴ However, Hipparchus could find himself in still greater uncertainty, if, for example, a snake appeared in his dream. In Clytaimnestra’s dream, a snake with a bloody head, from whom grew another snake, symbolized, according to Stesichorus, the murdered Agamemnon and his offspring Orestes.⁵⁵ Here the negative sense blends with the positive, for the legendary heroes, to which category Agamemnon and Orestes were assigned after their deaths, were often portrayed in the form of snakes.⁵⁶ However, according to Aeschylus, in the dream Clytaimnestra bore a snake which, in the course of breast-feeding, also sucked her blood,⁵⁷ which seems to allow the snake to both be a son of the earth and also a

that the Spartan king should overcome bulls and lions – that is, other rulers and kings. Cf. Doddson (n. 16), 95.

⁵³ Herodot. 5, 55. Cf. Dyson (n. 41), 188; Frisch (n. 16), 32–35; Doddson (n. 16), 91.

⁵⁴ Eur. Hec. 91; [Eur.] Rhos. 780–788; Artemid. on. 2, 12; 4, 56; cf. Ael. nat. anim. 7, 19. G. Devereux, *Dreams in Greek Tragedy. An Ethno-Psycho-Analytical Study*, Berkeley - Los Angeles 1976, 276–278; A. Önnersfors, *Über die alphabetischen Traumbücher (Somnialia Danielis) des Mittelalters*, in: A. Önnersfors, *Mediaevalia: Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, Frankfurt am Main - Bern - Las Vegas 1977, 32–57, see 49.

⁵⁵ Stes. fr. 219 Campbell = Plutarch, *de ser. num. vind.* 10, 555a. M. Bock, *Die Schlange im Traum der Klytaimnestra*, *Hermes* 71 (1936), 230–236, see 234, 236; Frisch (n. 16), 59; Devereux (n. 54), 171–179.

⁵⁶ See E. Küster, *Die Schlange in der griechischen Kunst und Religion*, Giessen 1913, 81/82, n. 7; or J.E. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, Cambridge 1908, 325–331.

⁵⁷ Aesch. *choeph.* 527–533, 549/550, 928. Cf. van Lieshout (n. 13), 208; Devereux (n. 54), 182–218.

symbol of death (i. e. a negative meaning).⁵⁸ Aeschylus' version nonetheless evokes stories of heroes who were conceived by a snake or appeared as that in a dream of their mother's (which clearly had a positive meaning)⁵⁹ so that the resulting meaning is again mixed, but for different reasons. Indeed, snakes possessed various meanings in religion, sexuality and other areas that further expanded the interpretive possibilities. Each of their occurrences in a dream must therefore always be determined *ad hoc* on the basis of context, similarly as with other divinatory methods (hodoscopy, theromancy) in which the snake and its occurrence served as a divinatory sign.

The same applies to the rest of the allegorical dreams. The identification of the deer with a ship in Lucullus' dream does not come about because deer regularly symbolized enemy ships; in Hecuba's dream, for example, the deer that is caught by the wolf represents not a ship but her murdered daughter.⁶⁰ The meaning of Lucullus' dream was determined by the goal which the Roman general was pursuing in the period leading up to the dream. The famous dream of Penelope's, in which an eagle breaks the necks of twenty geese, and in which the eagle symbolizes Odysseus and the geese her suitors, shows an even more obvious dependence on context.⁶¹ Although the eagle, as a bird consecrated to Zeus, the ruler of the gods, occasionally represented a governing and authoritative figure⁶² and could therefore on this basis also be applied to Odysseus, he does not in his address present himself as the ruler of Ithaca but as a husband, a function which the eagle did not usually symbolize.⁶³ Similarly, geese (or, more precisely, ganders) certainly did not

⁵⁸ Artemid. on. 2, 13; 2, 14. For negative interpretations of the snake, see also Bacch. ep. 9, 12–15; Herodot. 1, 78; Sil. FG rHist 86 F 2; Plut. Crass. 8, 8.

⁵⁹ See Liv. 26, 19, 7 (Alexander of Macedon); Suet. Aug. 94 (Octavianus); Aul. Gell. 6, 1, 3 (Scipio Africanus); cf. also IG IV¹ 2, 122, Nr. 42 from Epidaurus (4th cent. BC).

⁶⁰ Eur. Hec. 90/91. Artemid. on. 2, 12 considered the deer to be, above all, a symbol of the fugitive, but differentiated between various contexts and circumstances which gave different meanings to the image.

⁶¹ Od. 19, 535–550. Cf. Dodds (n. 1), 106/107; Pratt (n. 8), 147–152; A. Rozokoki, Penelope's Dream in Book 19 of the "Odyssey", CQ 51/1 (2001), 1–6, see 1–4.

⁶² Herodot. 5, 93 (Cypselus was the son of an eagle); Suda, s. v. Λάγος, 25, 3–7 Adler (the eagle was the symbolic bird of Ptolemy I Soter); Artemid. on. 2, 20; 5, 57.

⁶³ Cf. Artemid. on. 2, 2; 4, 56. Heliod. Aeth. 4, 14, 2–4, 15, 1 presents the only exception to this that is known to me. There, the eagle in the dream represents the future husband (perhaps with reference to Od. 19, 548), but does so in a rather strange manner as he simultaneously symbolizes that the god Apollo, who released the eagle from his hand, had consented to the marriage.

constitute the standard dream equivalent for troublesome suitors⁶⁴ – this only arises from the context of Homer's verses and the associated interpretation. Penelope herself was confused by the dream and did not succeed in ascertaining its meaning, mainly perhaps because she was saddened by the death of the geese but loathed the suitors of whom, indeed, there were considerably more than twenty (Od. 16, 245–253), thus opening the possibility of interpreting the geese as the number of years of her husband's absence.⁶⁵ Her confusion was dispelled at the end of the dream by the eagle, who *expressis verbis* spells out the meaning of the two symbols, thus making from an allegorical dream an epiphanic one (transl. A. T. Murray):⁶⁶

The geese are the wooers, and I, that before was the eagle,
am now again come back as thy husband.

IV.

Some dream symbols had a definite overlap with a more general meaning, but their semantic stability was never very high, and dreams did not contribute much toward this. The wreath, for example, symbolized government, victory or favor (therefore the loss of a wreath = the loss of government, victory or favor)⁶⁷ because it was rulers, victors and statues of the gods that were wreathed; however, because a wreath had a multitude of other functions, a dream about it could mean many other things.⁶⁸ In a dream, a hearth could represent a wife, a vagina, a home, or life itself (thus to place a sceptre into a fireplace = to beget offspring),⁶⁹ for the hearth formed the center-place of the Greek home and was where many family rituals occurred, including the welcoming of a bride or a newborn child. The valuation of the egg as a symbol of gain or wealth had the same natural foundation.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Geese in antiquity mainly symbolize guardians of the home (Arist. hist. anim. 488b20; Anth. Pal. 7, 425, 7; Pratt [n. 8], 151/152) but, again, a precise meaning was determined by the context (cf. Artemid. on. 4, 83). For the intentionally applied masculine form (ganders) see Rozokoki (n. 61), 2, n. 5.

⁶⁵ Cf. Artemid. on. 2, 20: eagle = one year. For more see Dodds (n. 1), 123, n. 21; Kessels (n. 1), 94, Pratt (n. 8), 149–151; Rozokoki (n. 61), 2/3.

⁶⁶ Od. 19, 548/549. Messer (n. 8), 30/31, 34/35; van Lieshout (n. 13), 200; Del Corno (n. 9), 57.

⁶⁷ Herodot. 7, 19; Plut. Eum. 6, 4–7; Artemid. on. 2, 33; 5, 7; 5, 55; 5, 95.

⁶⁸ Artemid. on. 1, 77; 4, 5; 4, 52; Paus. 4, 13, 2–4.

⁶⁹ Soph. El. 417–423; Artemid. on. 1, 74; 2, 10. Cf. Devereux (n. 54), 230–237.

⁷⁰ Chrysipp. SVF II, 344, fr. 1201; cf. Artemid. on. 2, 43; 5, 85.

But even seemingly unequivocal dreamscapes could, depending on their differing circumstances, evoke various meanings. When, for example, Xenophon dreamed that he was surrounded by flames that were the result of Zeus setting his house on fire, he wondered whether this was a good dream (i. e. Zeus as the originator of the fire that was burning Xenophon's home implied good) or a bad one (i. e. because of the dangerous flames). But, because he escaped from the fire, he concluded that it was a good one.⁷¹ But when Alcmena dreamed that her son Hercules was surrounded by a fire from which he couldn't escape, not even with his brother's help, she considered it a bad dream even though the fire here symbolized Hercules' immortality and deification (in reality, then, it had a positive meaning).⁷² Similarly, throughout antiquity, the mother was a symbol for the earth⁷³ and yet, in dreams about incestuous relationships with one's mother, some authors saw a prediction that the dreamer would gain unrestricted dominance over the land (in a positive and negative sense) while others considered an incestuous dream to merely be a product of the body that carried no symbolic or otherwise relevant validity.⁷⁴ However, not even supporters of the symbolic reading could come to an agreement as some interpreted the incestuous dream positively, regarding the domination of the mother-Earth as a positive value,⁷⁵ while others to the contrary valued it negatively, emphasizing both the unnaturalness and illicitness of such a relation and the unnaturalness and illegitimacy of the prognosticated government; in this regard, besides Plato, they perhaps also made use of stories which, for example, circulated about

⁷¹ Xen. *anab.* 3, 1, 11/12. For the good significance of such a dream cf. Artemid. *on.* 2, 10; Nicephorus 83; Germanus 171.

⁷² Mosch. 4, 104–110. Plastira-Valkanou (n. 13), 132/133.

⁷³ The Earth as a mother in general: Hom. *hymn.* Tell. 1; Pind. *Ol.* 7, 70; Aesch. *sept.* 16; Paus. 10, 12, 10. The Earth as a mother in a dream: Artemid. *on.* 1, 79; Paus. 4, 26, 3; Suet. *Iul.* 7.

⁷⁴ Prediction of governance: Herodot. 6, 107, 1 (for the tyrant Hippias, but erroneously; cf. Dodds [n. 16], 91/92); Plut. *Caes.* 32, 9; Suet. *Iul.* 7; Dio Cass. 37, 52, 2 (for Caesar). Product of the body: Soph. *OT* 980–982 (the dream, however, turned out to be predictive); Plat. *resp.* IX, 571c/d (brought about by the brutish part of the soul, which predominates with tyrants); Cic. *div.* 1, 29, 60 (brought about by food and drink); Calc. in Plat. *Tim.* 253 Waszink (brought about by the ungoverned passions of the body). For an analysis of the various manifestations of dreamed incest with one's mother, see Artemid. *on.* 1, 79.

⁷⁵ Paus. 4, 26, 3; Suet. *Iul.* 7. The Byzantine dream books also adapted this approach, see Astrampsychus 19; Nicephorus 73; Daniel 364.

Periander, who reportedly became a cruel tyrant as a result of committing incest with his mother (real, not dreamed).⁷⁶

The majority of dream symbols lacked a stable meaning and therefore, changed according to context. For example, three dream attempts at capturing the sun, which implies some regard for it, predicted to Cyrus a thirty-year reign but, for Tarquinius, seeing the sun after a butting by a ram meant an early end to his reign.⁷⁷ A dream about the sealing of a woman's womb signified, according to some interpreters, making her pregnant (as in Philip's dream that was discussed above) but, according to others, it signified infertility, for it was said that it wasn't possible to open that which was sealed.⁷⁸ The sprig that grew from the sceptre of Agamemnon, the father of Chrysothemis, cast a shadow over the whole of Mycenae and predicted the future reign of his offspring Orestes; similarly, in Herodotus, the vine growing from the body of the dreamer's daughter and casting the whole land in shadow signified the reign of her offspring Cyrus and the undoing of his grandfather Astyages. But, according to Artemidorus, such a dreamscape divined the daughter's death.⁷⁹

At other times, a similar signification or interpretation followed from very different images. In Herodotus, Polycrates' daughter dreamed that "her father hovered in the air and that Zeus washed him and Helios daubed him with ointment", which foretold his impalement. Similarly, in Artemidorus, a dream about the moon and sun in a joint race prophesized hanging to a man,

⁷⁶ Plut. *Caes.* 32, 9; Aristippus ap. Diog. Laërt. 1, 96. For more detail see Brenk (n. 31), 346; Pelling (n. 9), 200/201; C. Grottanelli, *On the Mantic Meaning of Incestuous Dreams*, in: *Dream Cultures. Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, edd. D. Shulman-G. G. Stroumsa, New York-Oxford 1999, 143–166, see 148–158. B. Büchschütz, *Traum und Traumdeutung im Alterthume*, Berlin 1868, 66 and 93, n. 214, therefore was not right when he thought that with the incest motif he had spotted one of the symbols with constant meaning.

⁷⁷ Cyrus: Din. FHG II, 91, fr. 10 (cf. Lanzoni [n. 41], 256/257). Tarquinius: Acc. Brut. fr. 1/2 Dangel = Cic. div. 1, 22, 44/45.

⁷⁸ Chrysipp. SVF II, 345/346, fr. 1206.

⁷⁹ Soph. *El.* 417–423; Herodot. 1, 108; Artemid. *on.* 5, 39. Both Atia's dream about Octavianus' future (see above) and Rhea's dream about the future of Romulus and Remus the twin brothers (*Ov. fast.* 3, 22–34) sound very similar, but most likely it is only a matter of literary motif deliberately put into play by Octavianus' propaganda (Wildfang [n. 11], 45/46; Kragelund [n. 11], 55, n. 8). Cf. further Büchschütz (n. 76), 66 and 93, n. 214; Hey (n. 8), 29; Frisch (n. 16), 6–11; Devereux (n. 54), 237/238; van Lieshout (n. 13), 208/209; Pelling (n. 42), 68–77 (the dream is purportedly grounded in an Oriental dream book and the fact that the vine was a symbol of the royal residence of the Achaemenids); Doddson (n. 16), 86/87.

for “as he hovered in the air, the sun and the moon watched him as they rose in the sky”.⁸⁰ Without knowledge of the context and the life situation of the dreamers, the two allegorical dreams from Ptolemy’s archive of dreams are also incomprehensible, although the symbols in them are also contained in Artemidorus.⁸¹

Some dream symbols cannot be traced to any cultural tradition at all as they originated as one-offs for a particular situation. Neither the Libyan fifer nor the Pontic trumpeter in the dream of the Cyzicenes’ town-clerk discussed earlier came from the common store of Greek symbols. Such a pattern is also evidently lacking for the snake monster of Hannibal’s dream.⁸² In Iphigenia’s dream, the column, which was the only thing that remained standing in the destroyed home and which subsequently grew hair and acquired the power of speech, was a reference to Orestes being the last descendant of the family line – except that this is not one of the symbols that generally stands for the last of a family line.⁸³ Caesar’s dream about the army weeping before Carthage only makes sense when we know that the Senate shortly beforehand had cancelled plans for a new settlement of the site due to an unfavourable sign;⁸⁴ the crying soldiers, that is to say, represented disappointed settlers, a significant portion of whom should, according to Roman law, be retired soldiers. In all these cases, whose number it would be possible to add to,⁸⁵ the dreamscapes are really transformed expressions

⁸⁰ Herodot. 3, 125/126; Artemid. on. 5, 19. Frisch (n. 16), 28–30; Doddson (n. 16), 90.

⁸¹ UPZ I, 77, 1–77 and I, 79, 17–20 (mid-2nd cent. BCE). Leuci (n. 1), 50/51; Weber (n. 44), 31/32.

⁸² Fifer and trumpeter: Plut. Lucull. 10, 2/3. Destructive monster: Sil. FGrHist 86 F 2.

⁸³ Eur. IT 42–64. It is true that Artemid. on. 2, 10 considers the column of the home as a representation of (male) offspring but, because his interpretation is accompanied by the citation of the aforementioned Euripidian verses, it should be easy to ascertain where his interpretation came from.

⁸⁴ App. Cart. 136/645.

⁸⁵ Aristoph. vesp. 31–36: the pig clamorously orating to the sheep at the Athenian assembly quite pointedly represent the bellowing demagogue Cleon, while the obtuse sheep correspond to the citizens who were completely bamboozled by him (cf. K. J. Reckford, *Catharsis and Dream-Interpretation in Aristophanes’ Wasps*, TAPhA 107 [1977], 283–312, see 303–305). Plut. Alex. 50, 6: when Alexander dreamed that he saw his friend Clitus sitting in black clothes with three of Parmenion’s sons, it foretold Clitus’ impending death by Alexander’s own hand, for he had killed Parmenion and one of his sons and had an indirect hand in the killing of the other two sons (cf. Brenk [n. 31], 340). Plaut. Merc. 225–254: in a dream the elderly Demipho sees distorted figures from his surroundings as a billy goat, nanny goat, kid and ape. Achill. Tat. 1, 3, 3/4: when a young man has a dream in which, in the lower part of his body, he is joined together with a

of reality rather than symbols. This is confirmed by the symbolic-looking dream of Kallikrateia, who asked Asclepius in Epidaurus about the location of the treasure that her dead husband had hidden (transl. L. R. LiDonnici).⁸⁶

“It seemed to her the god came to her and said, ‘In the month Thargelion in the noontime, within the lion lies the gold.’ When day came she left and when she arrived at home, she first searched the head of the stone lion, because nearby there was an ancient monument set up which had a stone lion. But when she didn’t find it, a seer declared to her that the god had not meant the treasure would be inside the stone head but in the shadow that would come from the lion in the month Thargelion at around midday. After this, making another search for the gold in that way she found the treasure, and she sacrificed the customary things to the god.”

The god’s words initially appeared so cryptic that a dream interpreter was consulted, but in the end it was shown to be only a very exact and completely non-symbolic localizing of the sought-after treasure. In this way, the seemingly symbolic dream was shown to only be a condensed account of reality, for whose solution it was necessary to investigate the context of the dream and not the dream alone.⁸⁷ Similarly, the context could supply an allegorical meaning to what was ostensibly an account of reality. When Xenophon dreamed that he saw his family home burning because of Zeus’ thunder bolt (see above), he did not take it as an epiphanic (i.e. bad) dream but as an allegorical (i.e. good) one because in Zeus’ light he saw a way out from underneath the burden of his problems.⁸⁸

beautiful girl after which they are hacked off from each other by a sickle wielded by a savage-looking power, it foretells a mutual amorousness followed by separation owing to an uncontrollable fate.

⁸⁶ IG IV² 1, 123, Nr. 46 from Epidaurus (4th cent. BC).

⁸⁷ A similar case reportedly occurred in Rome in 491 BC, when Titus Latinius “dreamed that Jupiter appeared to him, and bade him tell the senate that the dancer, whom they had appointed to head his procession, was a bad one, and gave him the greatest displeasure” (Fabius Pictor, fr. 15 Peter/19 Chassignet = Plut. Cor. 24, 2–25, 2, transl. B. Perrin). From the senators’ investigation it subsequently emerged that the procession organized to honor the god had by chance encountered a group in which a slave was being led to his execution; the slave was being flogged along the way and as a result of this thrashing was hideously writhing and twisting about (see further Liv. 2, 36, 1; Min. Fel. Oct. 7; Cic. div. 1, 26, 55; Dion. Hal. ant. Rom. 7, 68, 3–5; Val. Max. 1, 7, 4; Macr. sat. 1, 11, 3; Aug. de civ. Dei 4, 26). See Kragelund (n. 11), 77/78; Harris (n. 10), 174/175; A. Corbeil, *Dreams and the Prodigy Process in Republican Rome*, in: *Sub imagine somni: Nighttime Phenomena in Greco-Roman Culture*, edd. E. Scioli-Ch. Walde, Firenze 2010, 81–101, see 86–92.

⁸⁸ Xen. anab. 3, 1, 11/12; van Lieshout (n. 13), 210.

V.

The interpretation of dreams also contributed to the instability of the dream symbols. Dreamers, as well as interpreters, ordinarily viewed the allegorical dreamscape as a simple transformation whose meaning more or less directly reflected the life situation of the dreamer. When, for example, in Herodotus' description Asian rulers saw somebody in a dream from their milieu who was larger-than-life or possessed attributes of exceptional majesty (e. g. wings), they immediately deduced from it that the person would ascend to power and threaten their position.⁸⁹ In the event the allegory appeared more complex, the key to it was found with the help of a gamut of possible interpretations of the context, not in the symbols as such.⁹⁰

This reality quite fundamentally influenced the interpretation of dreams and all the books that were written about them during antiquity. Interpreters focused on the context of the dream, i. e. on the character, position and life circumstance of the dreamer, after which they intuitively or rationally sought the conversion mechanism or algorithm that would facilitate the uncovering of the reality that had been distorted by the dream allegorization.⁹¹ Artemidorus, for example, who chiefly based his interpretations on analogy,⁹² recommended taking into account six factors (στοιχεῖα) in the evaluation of a dream: nature (φύσις), law (νόμος), custom (ἔθος), skill (τέχνη), name (ὄνομα) and time (χρόνος).⁹³ Everything that happened in a dream at an appropriate place, appropriate time and in a manner appropriate (κατά) to a given person or thing was good, while all inappropriate, improper, untimely or anomalous dream events (παρά) heralded evil.⁹⁴ Similarly, all dream events that are favourable and beneficial to a person

⁸⁹ Herodot. 3, 30; 1, 209. Frisch (n. 16), 3–6; 30–32; Doddson (n. 16), 88–90.

⁹⁰ Cf. similarly Weber (n. 44), 32/33, according to whom it isn't possible to interpret the meaning of dreams in antiquity only with the help of a dream book, i. e. without knowledge of the context and of the actual living situation of the dreamer.

⁹¹ See especially Arist. de div. per somn. 2, 464b5–16. Cf. MacAlister (n. 8), 10–12.

⁹² Büchschütz (n. 76), 65/66; S. Price, *The Future of Dreams: from Freud to Artemidorus*, P & P 113 (1986), 3–37, see 24–26; Miller (n. 6), 86–88.

⁹³ Artemid. on. 1, 3. Büchschütz (n. 76), 63/64; C. Blum, *Studies in the Dream-Book of Artemidorus*, Diss. Uppsala 1936, 72–80; Holowchak (n. 3), 95; S.M. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium. Six Oneirocritica in Translation, with Commentary and Introduction*, Aldershot 2008, 22.

⁹⁴ Artemid. on. 4, 2 (transl. R. White): “Now, it is basic principle that everything that appears in accordance with nature, law, custom, profession, names, or time is good, but everything that is contrary to them is bad and inauspicious.” Cf. also Artemid. on. 1, 16; 2, 25. Price (n. 92), 13; Holowchak (n. 26), 394; Holowchak (n. 3), 95/96.

should be regarded as good, while the opposite events should be regarded as evil. Based on this same logic, ascending (i. e. the small changing into the large or the actual-sized into the larger) was preferred over descending (i. e. the large changing into the small or the actual-sized into the smaller), youth over old age, tameness over wildness, etc.⁹⁵

In such a situation it was as nonsensical as it was unfeasible to focus on some listing or lexicon of dream symbols or dreamscapes that always led to firmly determined meanings. It is true that by the Classical period dream interpreters were already offering their services to people at marketplaces and they would use some tables as an aid,⁹⁶ which on occasion has tempted some researchers into thinking that these were the first, primitive dream books.⁹⁷ With regard to the distinctly diminutive dimensions of the table (*πινάκιον*), it would seem most likely that they either contained a concise and very general listing of positive and negative meanings (e.g. that wealth, promotion, a trip, a divorce, and the like, await one) which the interpreter, after hearing the dream described, had determined by an as yet unknown method (e.g., on the basis of associations or with the help of the casting of lots which represent the already determined possibilities) or by a similarly chosen list of measures on how to appropriately react to a particular dream.⁹⁸

Although certain dream collections were already circulating in Classical times, it is very probable that they had the form of: (a) examples, which were part of theoretical texts with concrete illustrations of their main theses; (b) selections of significant, thematic or otherwise exemplary dreams with the appended interpretations and comparisons with reality (compare the fifth book of Artemidorus, Chrysippus' book and similar); (c) schematic tools for

⁹⁵ Artemid. on. 1, 50; 2, 2.

⁹⁶ Demetr. Phal. fr. 96 Wehrli (cf. also Plut. comp. Arist. et Cat. 3, 5); Alciph. epist. 3, 23, 1; 3, 23, 5; perhaps also Xen. anab. 7, 8, 1 (according to the text of some manuscripts with τὰ ἐνύπνια). Cf. Hey (n. 8), 36; D. Del Corno, *Graecorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae*, Milano - Varese 1969, 30, 115/116; Pritchett (n. 18), 93, n. 5; van Lieshout (n. 13), 173/174, 179.

⁹⁷ See, e. g., G. Guidorizzi, *Pseudo-Niceforo: Libro dei Sogni*, Napoli 1980, 18; Vincent-Bernardi (n. 1), s. v. 13.

⁹⁸ Cf. Büchschütz (n. 76), 46; Del Corno (n. 9), 58; van Lieshout (n. 13), 181/182, 227. It was possible to either affirm a dream, and so strengthen its fulfillment with prayer, libation or sacrifice (Xen. anab. 4, 3, 13; Philostr. vit. Apoll. 8, 12), or by trying to stave off its impact by retelling it to the sun, a returning to the earth, by dint of libation, a sacrifice or a purifying bath (Soph. El. 405–410, 424–427; Schol. in Soph. El. 424; Eur. Hec. 69–72, 80; Aesch. choeph. 523–525 and Pers. 201–204; Aristoph. ran. 1338–1341; Apoll. Rhod. Arg. 4, 662–669; Mosch. 2, 16–27).

professional interpreters, which were, thematically, only broadly categorized (the treatise *De diaeta* IV, the fourth book of Artemidorus, also possibly Aristander's book).⁹⁹ None of these works was intended for the average layperson, nor would they have served as a substitute for an experienced dream interpreter.

In contrast to this, the alphabetical dream books, of which ten have been preserved from the Byzantine Period, offer listings of symbols whose meaning is given *a priori* and in an unambiguously fixed form.¹⁰⁰ Until, however, a sufficient number of such symbols and their standard significating equivalents existed, an author could scarcely create them *ab ovo*.¹⁰¹ Those researchers who argue that the professional dream interpreters worked in all periods with standardized interpretations of symbols¹⁰² are, then, quite mistaken. Moreover, this interpretive tradition, as it has been preserved, not only was not founded on symbols with a constant meaning but, indeed, fundamentally resists a constancy of content of dream motifs and their mechanical application. This tradition conditioned the meaning of a dream on circumstances (the duration, the place, the time and so on), the particular characteristics of the dreamer and, above all, the overall context of the dream.¹⁰³

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the small number of surviving, symbolic dreams can be explained by the fact that, in the course of the Classical and Hellenistic Periods, there were only a very limited number of dream symbols

⁹⁹ A detailed listing and analysis of the accounts of authors dealing with dreams and their books is given by Del Corno (n. 96), although his conclusions do not always agree with those that I have presented here.

¹⁰⁰ See, e. g., Önnersfors (n. 54), 32–57; Guidorizzi (n. 97); K. Brackertz, *Die Volks-Traumbücher des byzantinischen Mittelalters*, München 1993; Oberhelman (n. 93).

¹⁰¹ See, e. g., Weber (n. 11), 31, n. 100.

¹⁰² See, e. g., J. Latacz, *Funktionen des Traums in der antiken Literatur*, in: *Traum und Träumen. Traumanalysen in Wissenschaft, Religion und Kunst*, edd. Th. Wagner-Simon-G. Benedetti, Göttingen 1984, 10–31, see 14; cf. also Büchschütz (n. 76), 67; and Pritchett (n. 18), 93/94.

¹⁰³ Artemidorus polemicized with other interpreters, asserting that animals or traditional symbols in myths cannot always have a definite, constant meaning (on. 2, 66; cf. E. Oder, *Das Traumbuch des Alexander von Myndos*, RhM 45 [1890], 637–639, see 638; MacAlister [n. 8], 12). Oberhelman (n. 1), 37, therefore considers that the difference between the Byzantine dream books and Artemidorus' dream book basically lies in the fact that the former presume a universal (unchanging) meaning of dream symbols.

or dreamscapes that had but a single, completely unconditional and generally accepted meaning. The very difficult question as to what the factors were that shaped this state of affairs or caused it to come into being must remain unanswered in this article. In part, the ambiguous nature of dreams themselves contributed to this state of affairs, as well as the quantity and the heterogeneous manner of their recordings and interpretations. There were also, however, the wider cultural milieu and its impact. On the one hand, it is possible to highlight the strong influence of traditional poetry and the divinatory tradition (especially divinatory *omina*) that, to a considerable extent, were built on deep and secret meanings which were inspired or shielded by divine authority (whose presence at least in part signalled the stylization of the dream and dream speech) and to which only the elect had access and, even then, only under specific circumstances.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, it remains to be considered, whether heterogeneity of (dream) symbols was also caused by the enduring political, cultural and, along with it, symbolic heterogeneity of Greek localities and tribes (as it was for example in the Roman Empire until the third century), or if the instability and ambiguity of the symbols constitute a natural state whose variation always involves some ideological or authoritative influence.

The meaning of dream symbols was often determined by an *ad hoc* authority, i. e. primarily diviners and gods. Sometimes they did this by means of lofty, explicit discourses, the result of which was that an allegorical dream became, in part, an epiphanic one. An allegorical dream carried less authority in antiquity than an epiphanic one and, because of its lack of clarity, was also less desirable; such dreams did, however, allow for more interpretative latitude. If necessary, the dreamers or interpreters could magnify its significance (e.g., by strengthening the role of the gods and the frequency of authoritative elements) or expand the field of its applicability (e.g., the shifting of symbols from an expected or undesirable context into a less common and more desirable one). The dreams that mothers and fathers had about the character of their future offspring demonstrate this characteristic particularly well. Many of them were most probably created *ex post facto* as propaganda to benefit the ruling circles, to which the dreamers belonged; nonetheless, the possibility of giving a suitable symbolic expression to the character of the expected child could also make for quite authentic dreamscapes. Therefore, even though many allegorical dreams were more or less stylized, they need not have necessarily been fictional, because to a

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Struck (n. 6), 23–25; 91–96, and especially 178/189.

certain extent the appearance and manner of the gods and authority figures were also stylized in the common dream imagination.

Some symbols had a more stable meaning, which however for the most part they didn't gain as a result of their regular presence in dreams, but because of their position in the real, waking world and on the basis of a natural reflection of reality (e.g., hearth = wife, home, and so on). Nonetheless, in these cases as well context is the primary determinant of the meaning of the dream symbol, not any fixed, given meaning. The first authors writing about dreams couldn't create catalogues of dream symbols and their semantic equivalents because they simply didn't have the material to work with. Many symbols were deciphered in various ways by dream interpreters, other symbols changed over the course of time, while only a minute number of them maintained an unchanging applicability. From this perspective, it would seem there is indeed only a small likelihood that, in the Hellenistic and early Roman period, any quantity of universally applicable dream books circulated.

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