

Introduction

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The conference whose papers fill this volume was a natural progression from our initial meeting at the American Academy in Rome in spring 2004, which lasted long past the original lunch hour that we had set aside for it. Given our mutual scholarly interest in dreams and our shared commitment to discovering new directions for the study of dreams in the ancient world, organizing a conference at which we could bring together a group of international scholars to turn this dialogue into a discussion struck us both as a most appealing way to channel the excitement we felt at our first meeting. Our shared excitement about this collaboration pervaded all aspects of our organization and was enhanced by the joint commitment of our host institutions. The result was a conference entitled *Sub Imagine Somni: Nighttime Phenomena in Greco-Roman Culture*, held over three days, April 13-15, 2005, at the American Academy in Rome and the Istituto Svizzero di Roma.

The idea for this conference was conceived with three goals in mind: one, to create a forum for the discussion of dreams, in which dreams could be examined in conjunction with other nighttime phenomena, such as sleep and insomnia; two, to see the study of nighttime phenomena examined across the disciplinary boundaries of literature, epigraphy, art history, religion, and cultural history; and three, to bring into conversation approaches to the study of dreams as literary phenomena and as “lived” experiences. With these goals in mind, we invited participants from the Italian, German-speaking, and Anglophone scholarly communities whose work we thought would be complementary and stimulating.

Common to all dreams is their elusive quality. In one of the earliest examples of a visitation dream, the shade of Patroclus visits Achilles in his sleep to request swift burial (Hom. *Il.* 23.62-107). After responding to his dear friend, Achilles attempts to embrace the shade, who slips away like smoke to the underworld. We feared that something analogous to this could happen after the conference, anticipating that it would be difficult to recapture the productive connections between the papers, and the discussions afterwards. But instead we now think of the volume, published more than four years after the conference, on analogy with Bellerophon’s golden

bridle, left for him by Athena after a dream in Pindar's 13th Olympian ode. Bellerophon wakes with a tangible remnant of his dream; we feel that this volume puts into physical form the 'spirit' of the Rome conference while providing a stimulating array of perspectives on the study of nighttime phenomena in antiquity.

The conference's title, *Sub Imagine Somni*, comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In one instance of the phrase's usage, Ovid tells us that Erysichthon, who is invaded and consumed by insatiable hunger in his sleep, spends a night dreaming of eating. He moves his empty mouth and grinds his teeth in imitation of eating while he is *sub imagine somni*, under the image of a dream (*Met.* 8.824). The phrase *sub imagine somni* serves as a unifying concept for the conference and the papers collected in this volume for various reasons. First, it reminds us of the fundamental power of the dream over the dreamer implicit both in the narrative of Erysichthon's delusion and in the implication of subordination in the preposition *sub*. Second, the use of the term *imago* has multiple connotations, among which are "likeness," "shade of the dead," and "mental picture." All of these have significance for the different aspects of dreams that are explored in the majority of the papers in this volume. Primarily, the word *imago* reminds us of the dream as something seen; whether it is the internal creation of the dreamer or a vision imposed externally, the dreamer plays a critical role as viewer, and it is the visual power of the dream-image that influences the dreamer's reaction to what he has seen or believes to have seen. Hinting at similarities between the dream-image and images from the visual arts, the word *imago* encourages us to think of dreams as a type of representation. The dream creates a form of reality, a type of fiction that can be deceptive in its illusionism and that has great implications for a dream's retelling and interpretation.

The power of the dream as an *imago* forms one of the volume's unifying concepts. In trying to link ideas about dreams as they are represented in literary genres such as elegy and epic, or described in dream-interpretation handbooks or inscriptions, or depicted in artistic media, it is helpful to think of the dream as an image, keeping in mind the various connotations of the word *imago*. At issue in many of the papers is the distinction between internal, self-generated, "psychological" dreams, and those that are said to originate outside of the dreamer's own imagination — dreams sent either by a god or a practitioner of magic, or those that contain a visit from a dead person. Rather than segregating the openly prophetic from the symbolic dreams, we hope that reading the papers in this volume as a unit will prompt consideration of their shared aspects.

This volume's examination of various nighttime phenomena in conjunction with one another has produced important parallels that were unforeseen by us when we initially conceived of the conference. The broad umbrella of the night, with its darkness and potential for deception, the powerful restraining force of sleep, which gently binds the sleeper and renders him vulnerable to the invasion of a dream and to the gaze of an onlooker, or the cruel inversion of this, in which the absence of sleep deprives the would-be sleeper of his charms either leaving him vulnerable or endowing him with poetic creativity and images of another kind, allow for great scope in the study of ancient attitudes towards the shadowy state of consciousness that both mimics death externally and imitates life internally.

This volume makes a significant departure from existing treatments of nighttime phenomena. Previous studies have tended to be limited to one phenomenon. The works of Kessels (1978) and van Lieshout (1980) focus on dreams alone, while the studies of Wiedemann & Dowden (2003) and Wöhrle (1995) concentrate on sleep. Other studies have been limited to one genre of literature in one culture, such as Devereux (*Dreams in Greek Tragedy*, 1976), or Grillone (*Il sogno nell'epica latina*, 1967) and Bouquet (2001) on Latin epic. Our approach acknowledges dream and dream interpretation as culturally determined phenomena, but contains no bias against modern approaches to the interpretation of dreams, such as those used in psychoanalysis. Some of the authors in this volume have employed modern approaches to dream interpretation not as interpretative tools but rather as sources for inspiration in their analyses.

Work on dreams that has taken a more holistic approach towards the study of dreams and their interpretation in antiquity have inspired our undertaking. These include the two volumes by C. Walde: Walde (2001b), which uses a phenomenological and literary approach to study the dreams in Greco-Roman poetry from Homer to Lucan, emphasizing the role of the dream as literary device, and Walde (2001a, with epilogue by A. Krovoza) which looks at ancient theories of dream interpretation while keeping the ideas of Freud in perspective. Other works that have a broad and comprehensive scope include those of Miller (1994), which looks at the meaning of dreams within the context of late antique culture; Weber (2000), who catalogues the dreams of the Caesars; and Näf (2004), which focuses on the figure of the dream interpreter in both Greece and Rome with glances to the Near East. In the process of editing our volume, William Harris's (2009) new volume was published. In his work we are excited to see a totally dif-

ferent, more confident approach to the study of dreams in antiquity. His work on the history of dreaming, which considers dreams not so much as context-dependent but as facts breaks new ground in the study of dreams, surpassing the work of Weber in its thematic scope.

The first three essays of the volume deal with the ancient concept of “seeing” dreams, with each examining the process of visualization in different contexts and from varying perspectives. In the volume’s first essay Jean Sorabella deciphers a visual code for sleep-watching in visual media that helps us understand the mysterious sleeping figures depicted in Greek and Roman art. By demonstrating that not all sleep-watchers cast a lustful gaze upon the sleepers with whom they interact, Sorabella shows that sleep-watchers are visually enthralled by the sleepers, who are the objects of their gaze. These sleepers, despite their apparent powerlessness, possess a particular ability to arrest their viewers. In turn, the immobility of the viewers themselves and their proximity to the sleeping figures creates the possibility that they can in certain cases be interpreted as the very images dreamed by the sleeping figures in the visual plane. This relationship of interlocked viewing can be extrapolated as a paradigm for the dynamic of viewership between the external viewer of a work of art and the figures depicted within it. Although we have no explicit revelation of the contents of a sleeper’s dream in ancient art, Sorabella’s essay reveals that the depiction of sleeping figures and their viewers reveals important information about the power of sleep both to fetter a sleeper and capture the viewer.

We move from the sleep-watcher to the dreamer in the volume’s second paper, which, like the first, considers material form both Greece and Rome within a wide chronological span. Gil H. Renberg’s paper catalogues various Greek and Latin inscriptions in religious contexts in which dreamers have recorded accounts of dream-visions that have helped or advised them in significant ways. In most of the cases the dreamer deemed it sufficient merely to acknowledge the occurrence of a dream-vision to establish the biographical importance of the experience and the justification for creating the inscription, as evidenced by the frequent appearance of the phrases *kat’onar* and *ex viso* with little elaboration in these dedications. We might call this process one of “self-fictionalizing.” We learn from Renberg’s sample of inscriptions how rarely the dreamer feels the need to describe what he has seen in his dream, thus assuming his reader’s awareness of the types of content for such dreams. Within Renberg’s selection of the more substantial inscriptions, which focus upon the descriptions of divine epiphanies and

their religious significance, we note a considerable diversity among their authors' modes for expression. The analysis of these important texts allows Renberg to point out where the references in inscriptions share features with dream-accounts in literature, thus allowing conjectures about what type of experience these refer to.

Sarah Iles Johnston's paper also deals with dreams as phenomena that originate outside of the dreamer, but she examines the issue from the perspective of those who send dreams, rather than the responses of those receiving them. The Greek magical papyri that Johnston examines give insight into the human practitioners of dream-sending, that is, those who have the skills to impose dreams on another person. Johnston's analysis also sheds light upon the social contexts for and motivations behind using magic to send dreams. By contrast with the dream-inscriptions discussed by Renberg, dreams sent through *oneiropompeia* are not tools for conveying useful information or advice to the dreamer; rather, they reveal more about the sometimes-harmful intentions and attitudes of the sender than about the desires of dream's recipient. Alternatively, a practitioner of dream-spells could utter a spell in order to receive information from a god that would enable him to improve his craft. In some cases, this was facilitated by passage of the divine apparition through the flame of a lamp into the dream. Johnston compares this method of receiving a vision of a god to the process of receiving a vision of a god through lychnomancy, in which the divine visitor is visualized through the process of gazing at the lamp's light.

Johnston's discussion of these phenomena in conjunction with one another helps us to understand the overlap between dreams and visions. The key element that links dreams and visions is that the environment provided by each, whether the dreamscape, or the light of a flame, enables a particular and circumscribed type of visualization of the divine; this is a mode for seeing that is distinctly different from the seeing done while awake. This comparison enables us once more to think of the dream as a type of "visual medium," conducive to seeing things invisible to the waking eye. As a counterpart to what precedes it, Johnston ends her discussion with an examination of spells that would prevent or "restrain" bad dreams. Johnston points out that there is little evidence for spells of this type, likely because those who experienced these types of dreams were most interested in interpreting them rather than averting them, since the dreamer recognized their importance as potentially prophetic. With the theme of prophetic dreams and their potential for interpretation and in mind, we turn from dreams in

the magical papyri to the fourth essay of this collection, which analyzes the function of dreams in the prodigy process in Republican Rome.

Anthony Corbeill looks at the circumstances under which the Roman senate would take dreams seriously as prodigies during the period of the Republic. He concludes that dreams were valued as prodigies during times of political crisis, or when belief in the state-controlled prodigy process was waning. This paper brings together critical examples of public dreams, that is, dreams experienced by individuals that had some relevance for the *salus publica*, a phenomenon that has interested writers from Artemidorus to Foucault. By examining the accounts of dreams and their aftermath from the final century of the Republic in light of the steps for establishing an event as a prodigy, Corbeill shows that dreams were, contrary to what most historians have argued, occasionally considered prodigies with relevance at the state level and were treated as such. As in Johnston's paper, Corbeill's paper considers the dream as something sent to a dreamer, who reacts to it in a way that will ultimately benefit the sender, whether a friend, an enemy, or an unhappy god, rather than the dreamer. Thus in both cases the dreamer's subjectivity is only relevant as it pertains to society at large when considering the motivation for or response to the dream. As with Johnston's dream spells in the magical papyri, the dreams that Corbeill examines reveal something about the present circumstances that extends beyond the specific concerns of the dreamer. In the case of the dreams analyzed in Corbeill's essay, they reflect a disruption in the divine sphere as it is communicated to the human dreamer.

The papers by Renberg, Johnston, and Corbeill all examine the dream as a mode for conveying information in the context of one general phenomenon, such as that of prodigies or magical spells. They also interpret the works of more than one author in their considerations. The next paper presents our first case study.

Sticking with the theme of dreams and their connection to the state during the Roman Republic, we move from dreams as prodigies to the politics of dreams in Fabio Stok's essay. Stok treats two dreams in the works of Cicero: Scipio's prophetic dream which concludes Cicero's *De Re Publica*, and Cicero's account of his own dream in *De Divinatione*. In his comparison of the two dreams, Stok concludes that there is no contradiction between Cicero's positive use of the prophetic power of dreams in *De Re Publica* as a literary device and his skepticism of this power in *De Divinatione*. Stok points out the political function of the prophetic dream in *De Re Publica*, by exploring the relationship between the dream of Scipio and the rest of

De Re Publica and between the dream itself and Scipio's retelling of it. Stok also demonstrates the similarities between Scipio's dream and that of Cicero himself, which is recounted by both Quintus and Cicero in *De Divinatione*. Through analysis of these particular points, Stok shows that Scipio's dream in *De Re Publica* is unique in literary function and quality, and thus does not present a challenge to Cicero's stance against divination through dreams in *De Divinatione*.

When Cicero claimed that even dreams created by poets resembled those possible in real life (*De Div.* 1.42), he drew attention to the deceptive nature of dreams. Even if dreams were completely invented, as in a work of literary fiction, their resemblance to real dream experiences made them easily mistaken for this very reality. The three essays that form the next group in the volume treat the role of dreams in literature (primarily in the epic tradition), acknowledging and examining the potential for deception inherent in dreams, as articulated by Stok. Sergio Casali's essay looks at dreams in epic poetry, particularly where they can be read "self-reflexively" as narratives recounted to a listener or reader, just as the epic poem itself, in which the dream is contained, is a narrative recounted. Casali argues that dreams in epic can be read as reflections upon the very process of creating narrative fiction. His essay examines the dream episodes of Latin epic in which dreamers dream images that the reader can identify as versions of the stories presented in predecessor texts — instances in which the dream acts as a type of portal through which earlier versions of the dreamer's narrative can "invade" the sleep of a dreamer, a phenomenon in some ways similar to the dream-visit of a deity or the shade of a dead person. Although it would seem that through their references to earlier texts, these dreams would actually be more reliable, in fact these dreams present significant interpretive difficulties, as they are opportunities for authors to capitalize upon the inherently deceptive quality of dreams (and therefore poetic representation itself) by thwarting readers' expectations. The intertextuality of dreams does not ensure or enhance their truthfulness: authors either create new fictions, or construct a response to the dream that challenges its very believability. Thus the dreams of Virgil and Valerius Flaccus become opportunities for reflection upon the deceptive nature of dreams themselves, and by extension, of literary texts in general. Casali concludes his essay with an examination of Virgil's famous declaration about the gates of dreams in *Aeneid* 6, and encourages us to reconsider the meaning of this elusive passage by keeping in mind the dreams from earlier in Virgil's narrative.

In an essay that continues the examination of dreams in Latin epic poetry, Paolo Esposito treats the dreams of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Esposito's essay looks in particular at what he calls "momenti 'surreali,'" instances in Lucan's epic that fall between hallucinations and narrative pauses. Esposito argues that visions and apparitions appear at critical moments in the text, blurring the line between sleep and waking, and establishing a continuity between daytime hallucinations and nightmares experienced during sleep. While Casali's essay demonstrated that dreams were points at which an epic author could evoke predecessor texts, Esposito's essay shows that in Lucan's epic, the dream episodes allow readers to appreciate two essential features of Lucan's style, namely his ability to obscure the distinction between things actually seen and those which characters only believe they have seen, and his suspension of narrative. Both distinct features of Lucan's narrative style play a role in disturbing the conventions of narrative fiction, by challenging the expected illusion of verisimilitude on the one hand, and by calling into question "normal" narrative progression, on the other. Considered together, these devices underscore the tension that runs throughout the *Bellum Civile* over rendering the catastrophic significance of the war's events relevant and perceptible. These disruptions and suspensions of narrative, such as those created by the visions and nightmares of Lucan's characters, can be connected to his well-documented use of macabre scenes in his epic.

The volume's next essay also investigates the narrative function of dreams and opens up the horizon to more general reflections about dreaming. In her inquiry, Vered Lev Kenaan explores a key connection between the ancient concept of the "psychological" (or non-prophetic dream) and the process of writing fiction in texts that span a wide chronological spectrum. Lev Kenaan reveals this connection through an analysis of the realm of mental activity that we commonly refer to as the "unconscious," but for which the Greeks and Romans has no specific term. Whereas dream interpreters in antiquity relegated the non-prophetic dream to a status inferior to dreams that predicted future events, Lev Kenaan argues that the importance of these "psychological" dreams was recognized and exploited as a narrative tool by writers of fiction. These writers used a "poetics of dreams" to create experiences for their protagonists and their readers that are unexpected, by using the context of sleep and dreams to reveal their characters' hidden desires. Lev Kenaan uses the allegory of the cave and the story of Gyges in Plato's *Republic* and Apuleius' tale of Lucius' transformation into an ass in the *Metamorphoses* as different models for reading fictional narratives through the template of the dream experience. By examining elements such

as distortion, lack of logic, and absurdity — all features common to dreams — Lev Kenaan demonstrates the intricate use of a dream poetics in these heterogeneous narratives. Furthermore, her inquiry identifies important similarities between physical metamorphosis and the transformations that a dreamer undergoes while dreaming. Lev Kenaan reads Gyges and Lucius as sleepers who dream the narratives of their metamorphoses, temporarily freed from the control to which they would be subjected while awake. She concludes that both Gyges and Lucius, like unconscious dreamers, are compelled to look at what is forbidden to them, and, upon looking, just as in a dream, they confront an unfamiliar part of themselves.

With the next essay we turn from the relationship between dream and narrative to the subject of professional dream interpretation. Beat Näf considers the *Oneirokritika* of Artemidorus, asking whether a textbook of dream interpretation can indeed be used to gain an accurate understanding of ancient dream accounts and their metaphors and allegories in general. Näf examines the relationship between dream narration and dream interpretation, asserting that the “personality” of the interpreter, as well as his methodology and stated goals for the work, are paramount in understanding his presentation of ideas. His work shows that dream accounts and interpretations must be considered within their social contexts. By focusing in particular upon dreams containing horse imagery, Näf is able to test the universality of Artemidorus’ ideas against the appearance of a particular dream motif in other extant sources from the classical, late antique, and Byzantine periods.

While Näf’s essay is wide-ranging in its chronological and geographical scope, the subsequent essay by Fritz Graf focuses on the interconnection between dreams, visions, and revelations in the Latin patristic authors. Acknowledging the important role that dreams and related phenomena play in these works, Graf examines closely three connected points of inquiry: the differences between a polytheist and a monotheist religion in identifying the function of dreams; the role played by demons in sending dreams; and dreams in which the dreamer was visited by a dead person. Addressing the distinction between types of dreams and types of dream recipients, Graf visits territory familiar from Lev Kenaan’s essay, which treated the distinction between dreams sent by the gods and those that reflect the internal preoccupations of the dreamer, but his work looks at how the Christian writers of late antiquity grappled with the prophetic dreams supposedly sent by pagan gods to pagan dreamers. With the transformation of pagan gods into demons in Christian thought, the dreams that these gods sent were

relegated to an inferior status, which categorized them as deceptive and untrustworthy, even if convincing to the dreamer. Graf's essay draws attention to the role of dreams in the process by which early Christian thinkers from Tertullian to Augustine distinguished their beliefs from those of their pagan predecessors. In this process, the Christian God becomes the sole receptacle for truth, while dreams and those who "peddle" them become emblematic of what is untrustworthy and capable of steering the believer away from his devotion to God. Graf identifies in the trend towards the fear of deceptive dreams sent by demons a progressive fear of the night in general. By tracing the evolution of the dream from something with the potential for divination in pagan culture to a vehicle for deception by shape-shifting demons in early Christian thought, Graf also charts the evolution of the dream as a vehicle for visiting the world beyond to a vehicle for a visionary near-death experience, from which the dreamer is charged with the task of reporting what he has seen. With its interest in the link between dream and vision, Graf's paper overlaps with the material explored by Johnston.

Barbette Stanley Spaeth investigates the violence allowed by the dark cover of night, in particular the instability that night creates for the sleeper who is vulnerable to attack, and the cover night provides for the deceptive characters who commit this violence. By closely analyzing the tales of attacks by night hags, creatures similar to witches who appear in the work of the Roman authors Ovid, Petronius, and Apuleius, Spaeth presents a taxonomy of features shared by these stories. She concludes that their use as humorous tales is a direct reflection of the fear in Roman society of sexually 'deviant' women, a quality that is magnified in the aggressive behavior of the night hag or witch. But aside from the importance of night in these stories, there are further connections to be made with the larger themes of this volume. For example, the metamorphosis experienced by the victims of these attacks is in many ways similar to that which occurs to the dreamer who has been adversely affected by a dream vision. Thus the night hag can be compared to a dream-vision, who manipulates the sleeper as he sleeps (and possibly dreams). The association of the night hag with witches and magic also reminds us of the power of magic to invade sleep and create "invasive" dreams, as examined in Johnston's paper treating the magical papyri. This conflation is likely made in cultures where the phenomenon of sleep paralysis is associated with the attack by a night hag. That this type of paralysis could be explained as a violent attack by sinister and sexually deviant powerful women is a particular way of explaining some of the physically debilitating and mentally terrifying aspects of nightmares. This explanation

may also account for the striking similarities between the diverse accounts discussed by Spaeth.

From Spaeth's essay on destructive night attacks, we move to Annemarie Ambühl's treatment of literary descriptions of insomnia, a threat to would-be sleepers rivaling that of the night hag. It seems appropriate to close a volume on nighttime phenomena in Greco-Roman culture with a piece that treats insomnia — the lack of sleep and dreams — in both Greek, Roman, and modern literature. Ambühl points out that insomnia is variable in Latin literature, as it can be voluntary or involuntary, but in both cases productive. For example, an insomniac can replace sleep with writing, while the poem he creates substitutes for his dream. In fact, the experiences of a person suffering from insomnia can be compared to those of a dreamer. Ambühl's analysis of Orpheus, whom she calls the "prototype of the elegiac lover," exemplifies how one who doesn't sleep can nevertheless exist in a dream-like state. The fact that Orpheus's journey to the underworld takes place before his extended nighttime lament is important, as it allows us to explore the connections between a journey to the underworld and the experience of dreaming, both of which are contexts for interacting and communicating with the dead.

The wide scope of sources treated in Ambühl's paper expands the sphere of inquiry to include the modern reception of ancient ideas about nighttime phenomena. Analyses of modern sources that appear elsewhere in the volume, such as Sorabella's consideration of an image by Picasso and Casali's discussion of a television version of the *Aeneid*, have also demonstrated the value of considering later sources in the analysis of ancient material. We hope that the diverse approaches to nighttime phenomena included in this volume will inspire our readers to continue this interdisciplinary inquiry and to identify modern contexts in which lie the ancient impulses to represent, narrate, and contemplate sleep and dreams.