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## Sleeping culture in Roman literary sources

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## SLEEPING CULTURE IN ROMAN LITERARY SOURCES

LAURA NISSIN

### Introduction

Understanding the social significance of sleep is fairly recent. The questions of sociological sleep research —how, when, where and with whom people sleep— were first phrased by B. Taylor in 1993 and the premises for sociological sleep study – "*How we sleep, when we sleep, where we sleep, what meanings we attribute to sleep, who we sleep with, are all important socially, culturally and historically variable matters*" – have been later refined by S. Williams as well as S. Arber from The Sociology of Sleep group at The University of Surrey.<sup>1</sup>

Historical sleep research, a discipline introduced by Robert Ekirch, attempts to shed light on the "dormant third" of past lives. Ekirch asserts that pre-modern European sleeping cultures are characterized by dividing sleeping into intervals instead of confining sleep to one solitary block in the night.<sup>2</sup> Whether this phenomenon, called "segmented sleep," can be seen in the Roman evidence, is tackled in this study.

In earlier scholarship on Roman cultural history, sleeping is mentioned occasionally.<sup>3</sup> Groundbreaking work concentrating on ancient Roman night and sleeping as phenomena has been done especially by T. Wiedemann and K. Dowden,<sup>4</sup> and the case of the *cubiculum* (bedroom) has been examined by An-

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor 1993, 463-71, 465; Williams 2005, 1; Williams 2008, 641; *The Sociology of Sleep group* at the University of Surrey: [www.sociologyofsleep.surrey.ac.uk](http://www.sociologyofsleep.surrey.ac.uk).

<sup>2</sup> Ekirch 2005, 300-2.

<sup>3</sup> Friedländer 1910, e.g., 335 (in context of medication) and 388-94 (*salutatio*); Veyne 1987, 73.

<sup>4</sup> Wiedemann 2003; Dowden 2003. See also Scioli – Walde 2010. In anthropological research, e.g., Galinier *et al.* 2010.

drew Riggsby and Anna Anguissola.<sup>5</sup> Despite these studies much of the Roman sleeping culture still remains unexplored. I aimed to fill some of these gaps in my previous articles, which concentrate on the uses of *cubicula*, the aspects of privacy in Roman sleeping arrangements and on the sleeping arrangements in an archaeological context.<sup>6</sup>

In this article I pursue a new, cross-disciplinary approach to the social aspects of Roman sleeping culture. I apply the premises introduced in sociological sleep research by asking the research questions -how, when, where and with whom Romans slept, and which social and cultural factors determined these arrangements- drawing on the historical evidence from Latin literature. Sleeping is fundamentally important to the well-being of humans; in order to solve the sleep related problems, it is crucial to understand how sleeping is arranged in different societies past and present. The results of my study will then be useful in several contexts: not only in the field of Classical Studies, but also more generally in research on sleep and sleeping. Even though inspiration for this work comes from sociological sleep research, the methods of the social sciences cannot be applied in historical research as such, due to the scattered nature of the evidence available.

I have gathered relevant texts on sleep and sleeping by using *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* (henceforth *TLL*) as well as digital databases such as Brepolis *Library of Latin Texts* widening the net of evidence from studying only one space (*cubiculum*) to general sleeping and resting.<sup>7</sup> In the data mining process, I focused especially on passages which tell us about the actual sleeping habits in the Roman *domus* in urban Roman Italy. Therefore, mythological and philosophical texts, for example, as well as the ones relating to the military are included only rarely, mainly if they reveal some general aspects of the Roman sleeping culture, such as attitudes toward sleeping.<sup>8</sup> Late Republican and (early) Imperial texts are in the majority, but the overall time frame is wide, ranging

<sup>5</sup> Riggsby 1997 and Anguissola 2010. In social history as well as archaeological research, see, e.g., Leach 1997 and 2004; Wallace-Hadrill 1994; Zaccaria Ruggiu 1995; Carucci 2007; Dickmann 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Nissinen 2009; Nissinen 2012; Nissin 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Walter de Gruyter, Berlin: *Thesaurus linguae Latinae (TLL) Online* (degruyter.com/db/tll), and Brepolis Publishers, Turnhout: *Library of Latin texts* (clt.brepolis.net/llta).

<sup>8</sup> In addition, I have used such sources as *Historia Augusta*, Pseudo-Quintilian's *Declamations* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, even though the (historical) accuracy of these texts is doubtful. I believe, however, that these can be used as sources conveying ancient attitudes towards sleeping.

from archaic plays to Late-Antique legal texts with the presumption that terminology and the main aspects of sleeping culture remained for the most part unchangeable in this time period. Some of these elements might have changed in Late Antiquity and the possible changes in sleeping culture in Late Antiquity moving towards the Middle Ages, would need a separate study. However, the investigation of *cubicula* in Late Antique texts, carried out by K. Sessa, shows that the early Christian *cubicula* were identified as secluded places for spiritual intimacy<sup>9</sup> which, to my mind, seems to suggest certain continuity for the role of the *cubiculum* as a secluded space inside the Roman *domus*.

Certain themes come up repeatedly, such as moralistic views on sleeping habits, while other subjects remain marginal. In addition, the sources do not treat all inhabitants of the Roman world evenly. As has always been the problem for Roman social historians, the literary sources are written by (elite) men mainly about (elite) men. However, through their eyes at least some kind of evidence can be found even on the more marginal groups - women, slaves and children - and a careful reading of the texts brings forth the secrets of bedrooms and beds, or as Ausonius puts it, *cubiculi et lectuli operta prodentur*.<sup>10</sup>

In the first part, I discuss *where Romans slept* by examining what the sources reveal of the physical surroundings of sleeping and how the settings for sleeping were formed: bedrooms, beds, furniture and other conditions for sleeping. Then I move on to the users of bedrooms, aiming to answer the question *with whom Romans slept*. The scheduling of sleeping, *when Romans slept*, and some of the more abstract issues on *how Romans slept* and how sleeping as a phenomenon was seen among Romans form the third part. The privacy provided for the sleepers, or the lack thereof, is observed as well.<sup>11</sup> The factors behind these arrangements are further outlined in the conclusions.

In recent scholarship, a certain consensus on the use of space and the multifunctionality of Roman houses seems to prevail. This view maintains that the spaces in Roman houses were multipurpose and no clear function-based division can be seen. According to the underlying theoretical approach to sleeping, setting aside private, individual and permanent spaces for sleeping was not

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<sup>9</sup> Sessa 2007, 172, 180, 187.

<sup>10</sup> Auson. 358,5 p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Riggsby 1997, 44: *cubiculum* as a room for secret activity. Pondering of the privacy and the use of space in Roman houses, see, e.g., Wallace-Hadrill 1988 and 1994, as well as articles in Laurence – Wallace-Hadrill 1997; Leach 1997; Dunbabin 1994; Hales 2003; Carucci 2012.

a phenomenon pertaining to ancient Roman culture, sleeping could take place wherever one felt like it and beds and bedding were moved around the house.<sup>12</sup> However, based on literary evidence on sleeping and theories of space, there is room for a dissenting view as well, as I argue throughout this article.<sup>13</sup>

The main emphasis of this study is on the private lives of the Romans and the functioning of domestic space in everyday (-night) life, and sleeping forms the core; other bedroom activities play only a minor role. The philosophy of sleep and dreams in ancient thought is also a subject which falls outside the scope of this study.<sup>14</sup>

### Where Romans slept: beds and bedrooms

*Cubiculum* is usually translated as bedroom, even though a somewhat wider role for the room has been proposed. Riggsby claims that *cubicula* do not have one well-defined function.<sup>15</sup> The most important activities taking place in *cubiculum* were rest and sex, and Riggsby further points out that murders and suicides also occurred in *cubicula*.<sup>16</sup> Receiving guests is one of the main functions associated with the *cubiculum*, yet the prevalence of this function has been debated in research.<sup>17</sup> In my opinion, however, there are certain key elements which define *cubicula* and distinguish them clearly from other spaces in the Roman *domus*. Firstly, activities which need a bed form the core of the function of this room. What is important to note is that resting or sexual activities are usually the backdrop for the violent scenes depicted as often taking place in bedrooms. Even while receiving guests, the use of the bed is essential: in many cases the host is bedridden, usually due to illness. Beds also served for seating and for conducting literary activities.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Outlined especially in Allison 2004, 167. See also other scholars touching the subject: Neveit 1997, 290-1 and 297; Riggsby 1997, 40; Leach 2004, 50; Dickmann 2010, 71; Veyne 1987, 73.

<sup>13</sup> For these questions in archaeological material, see also Nissin 2015.

<sup>14</sup> In Roman material from Cicero's *De Divinatione* to Tertullian (especially *anim.* 43). Recent approaches to the subject, see, e.g., Harris 2009 and Harrison 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Riggsby 1997, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Riggsby 1997, 37-9, 42; Nissinen 2009, 88-9.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Nissinen 2009, 89-90.

<sup>18</sup> See Nissinen 2009, 89-90 for more on reception as well as note 61 for beds serving as seating,

Secondly, in addition to being used for activities closely related to each other, Roman sleeping areas were also linguistically differentiated. In the light of theories of space, as we know from S. Kent, these are features closely connected to the segmented organization of space, typical of complex societies.<sup>19</sup> Vitruvius' well-known and frequently cited passage 6,5 reveals how the spaces in the Roman house were terminologically distinguished and divided into two opposing categories, *communia* (common, public) and *propria* (one's own). According to Vitruvius, those areas where one could enter without an invitation were *vestibula*, *atria* and peristyles. The *cubiculum* belongs to the latter alongside baths (*balneae*) and dining rooms (*triclinia*). In the literary evidence, a *cubiculum* is often connected with spaces which served for feasting.<sup>20</sup> However, there is a clear distinction between *cubicula* and *triclinia*, further corroborating the linguistic as well as functional differentiation of these spaces. This is notably revealed in texts which contrast noisy feasting and entertainment with peaceful bedchambers,<sup>21</sup> or which hint that the dining room was not the customary place to sleep: people were carried or led from dining room to bedroom after dinner, especially if they were no longer in a condition to continue dining.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, the Roman bedchambers were designed for peace, quiet and even secrecy.<sup>23</sup> The juxtaposition of public and private is displayed through the use of the *cubiculum* in the literature; the secluded and secure *cubiculum* is the place for informal dress, unlike the busy city life, which needs a suitable outdoor

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n. 175-6 on convalescent hosts and the section "Burning the midnight oil" for literary activities in bedroom. In addition, see Plin. *epist.* 5,5 for working in bed and Aur. Fronto p.85 v.d.H, hinting the same.

<sup>19</sup> Kent 1990, 127-52.

<sup>20</sup> Riggsby 1997, 37. Ancient sources, e.g. Sen. *epist.* 47,7. See also Sen. *epist.* 95,24. Cf. Zaccaria Ruggiu 2001, 59-101 for a hypothesis that the close connection between *cubicula* and *triclinia* can also be seen in archaeological material.

<sup>21</sup> Varro *Men.* 319 and 337.

<sup>22</sup> Diners escorted to bedroom: Liv. 1,58,1; Cic. *Deiot.* 21; carried: Hist. Aug. *Ver.* 4,8; staying in the dining room contrary to custom: Petron. 85-6; see also note 37 below for the distinction between beds and dining room couches.

<sup>23</sup> Plin. *paneg.* 83; secret activities in a *cubiculum*: Quint. *decl.* 316,16; Apul. *met.* 3,15; a seemingly solitude *cubiculum*: Tac. *ann.* 4,69; connecting secrecy and *cubiculum*: Aug. *serm.* 139; cf. Varro *ling.* 5,162 (separating spaces) and Ov. *ars* 2,617 (secrecy of *thalamus*); see also the section "Security matters: control and protection of sleeping areas" as well as notes 77-8 below.



wear.<sup>24</sup> In the same vein, sleeping was considered a private action (*singularis*).<sup>25</sup> It can be thus concluded that *cubiculum* was a separate, even private bedroom of (elite) *domus*.

Of the other words meaning bedchamber in Latin texts, the closest synonym for *cubiculum* is *thalamus* from Greek. It is the word of choice for poets (mainly for metric reasons), used especially for the room reserved for the bridal bed, the marriage bed itself and as a figurative expression for marriage or engagement,<sup>26</sup> and was a separate and secluded room similar to a *cubiculum*.<sup>27</sup> A room used for resting somewhere other than inside the *domus* or only temporarily, needed a more general term. *Conclave*, which refers to a structure (closed with a key) –just as *cubiculum* implies activity (reclining)–<sup>28</sup> could be used for this purpose. *Conclave* appears as a provisional bedroom, the bedroom in a roadhouse, or as a word for infirmary.<sup>29</sup> *Cella* is the word used for the sleeping area of slaves and the poor.<sup>30</sup>

Even though wealthy Romans had secure bedchambers (and beds), sometimes it was necessary to sleep on the ground and even outside. Sleeping rough was either considered to be brutish or virtuous, depending on the context: the same manner was admirable if it testified to the worthiness of the Roman forefathers or mythical superheroes but deplorable if done by savages and other outsiders to the Roman world.<sup>31</sup> Some writers admired the modest and austere

<sup>24</sup> Aug. *c. Iulian. op. imperf.* 4,44. Cf. references to suitable attires for different occasions Cic. *fin.* 2,77; Suet. *Vit.* 8; Suet. *Aug.* 73.

<sup>25</sup> Cic. *inv.* 1,40,27.

<sup>26</sup> Riggsby 1997, 37; Leach 1997, 68; Lewis – Short s.v. *thalamus* (ancient sources, e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 6,91-4 and 7,92-101).

<sup>27</sup> Cf., e.g., Ov. *ars* 3,223-30: keeping secret behind closed door of *thalamus*; Ov. *ars* 2,260 (a guard / servant in front of the door); Ov. *ars.* 2,617.

<sup>28</sup> Leach 1997, 59.

<sup>29</sup> Ter. *Haut.* 895-907 (temporary bedroom); Cic. *div.* 1,15 (travel); Hist. Aug. *Diad.* 4 (parturition). What is notable is in the medical writings (e.g., Cels. 3,4 etc.), *conclave* seems to be the choice of word for infirmary rather than *cubiculum*, which in this sense is only used by both Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger: Plin. *nat.* 30,52; Plin. *med.* 2,13 (however, as the place of sickbed in a private house, *cubiculum* is mentioned often).

<sup>30</sup> *TLL*, vol. III, p. 759, lin. 74 (Sen. *contr.* 7,6,4; cf. Sen. *epist.* 100,6; Cic. *Phil.* 2,67).

<sup>31</sup> Heroic: Heracles in Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 28; Caesar in Suet. *Iul.* 72. Virtuous: Sil. 15,101-12. Brutish: Ov. *met.* 1,628-38; Plaut. *Truc.* 276-80. Barbaric: Tac. *Germ.* 46.

living -including a bed on ground- of ideal ancestors, and opposed it to their own age.<sup>32</sup> However, the seemingly modest manner of life could also be criticized if it revealed fake self display or parsimony.<sup>33</sup> In addition, sleeping outside also appears in military contexts.<sup>34</sup>

### *Physical aspects of sleeping arrangements*

The quintessential piece of bedroom furniture is obviously the bed.<sup>35</sup> In Roman houses, there were different types of household furniture -including beds as well as bedding- for different and specialized purposes. The Roman paraphernalia for sleeping and reclining was very elaborate and versatile and the beds (and bedding) varied from the most luxurious to very humble and poor.<sup>36</sup> All beds were not made the same, and there is a difference between the beds/couches used in bedrooms and the ones used in dining rooms.<sup>37</sup> However, there are no indications that bunk beds or other similar solutions were used.

Beds had many names, which are more or less used interchangeably, but *lectus* (and diminutive *lectulus*), *grabatus* (and its variants) and *torus* refer usually to concrete objects, whereas *cubile* can also denote more generally a place of rest.<sup>38</sup> *Lectus* is the bed used by real people in a real *domus*, while *cubile*

<sup>32</sup> Sen. *dial.* 12,10,7; Iuv. 6,1-10.

<sup>33</sup> Sen. *epist.* 5,2; Hor. *sat.* 2,1,117-19.

<sup>34</sup> Liv. 21,4; Sall. *Jug.* 85,34; Sil. 7,292 (cf. opposite Sil. 11,396-414). Cf. also Don. *vita Verg.* 17: sleeping outside in the context of agrarian occupations such as herding.

<sup>35</sup> Of bed and identity, see Aubert – White 1959, II,14. The typology of Roman beds and couches in archaeological contexts has been examined in several extensive studies, see especially Ransom 1905 and Mols 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Of the versatility of beds: Varro *ling.* 5,166–8, 8,16 and 9,45; Isid. *orig.* 20,11. Extravagant and luxurious beds: e.g., Iuv. 6,593-97; Mart. 12,66 and 14,85; Hist. Aug. *Ael.* 5,6-10; humbler: Iuv. 3,190-211 and 11,76-99; Mart. 5,62. For bedding, see section "Bedding and bedroom furniture" below.

<sup>37</sup> Difference in forms, use and terminology: Varro *ling.* 8,16; Rut. Lup. 2,7; Hist. Aug. *Heliog.* 20,4. Cf. *stibadium*, which seems to denote purely a couch used for dining (e.g. Mart. 14,87). Couches elsewhere, e.g., in Cic. *de orat.* 3, 17: *exedra*.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., *cubile* in context of animals: Liv. Andr. *trag.* 33; Liv. 26,13.

could be found in a more imaginary setting.<sup>39</sup> In addition, *cubile* often appears in a military connection.<sup>40</sup>

*Grabatus* was a humble camp bed which could be used for temporary needs. The distinction between *lecti* and *grabati* was used in literature to symbolize the disparity between the wealthy and the poor.<sup>41</sup> *Graba(t)tus* also appears several times in a Biblical context and it is the choice of word for the portable bed in the well-known passage in the Vulgate "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."<sup>42</sup> However, the Roman *grabatus* had legs.<sup>43</sup> It is possible that some mats and pallets were used for sleeping in Roman Italy as well, especially by slaves, but the evidence is wanting.<sup>44</sup>

Bed was not just an object for the Romans, it carried certain connotations. In literature, bed was also used metaphorically, especially as symbol of partnership and love;<sup>45</sup> this connection is common to *lectu(lu)s*, *torus* and *cubile*.<sup>46</sup> *Grabatus* seems to have been too humble for an allegory of marriage. An empty bed was used to emphasize loneliness.<sup>47</sup> A Roman bed could be used in literature to represent chastity<sup>48</sup> as well as debauchery.<sup>49</sup> In addition, beds, similarly to bedrooms, were meant for rest, quiet, *otium* and even *secretum*.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ov. ars* 2, 475; mythological texts: *Sen. Herc. O.* 1440; *Verg. Aen.* 6,268-84. See also *Fest.* p. 348.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. *Liv.* 9,37, 25,9 and 25,24.

<sup>41</sup> Forms *grabatus* (*grabattus*), *grabatum* (-*ttum*): *TLL*, vol. VI 2, p. 2127, lin. 75 - p. 2129, lin. 16. Role of *grabatum*/-*us*: *Cic. div.* 2,129; *Varro ling.* 8,16,32; *Moret.* 1; *Sen. epist.* 18,7,55 and 20,9,63; *Mart.* 4,53, 6,39 and 12,32. Other such words for bed as *cama* (*TLL*, vol. III, p. 200, lin. 36 - p. 200, lin. 40) and *scimpodion* (*Gell.* 19,10,1), were however excluded from this study, since they occur so rarely.

<sup>42</sup> *Vulg. Ioh.* 5,8.

<sup>43</sup> *Mart.* 12,32.

<sup>44</sup> Mats: *Mart.* 6,39 and 9,92; *Iuv.* 6,117.

<sup>45</sup> Connected to marriage: e.g. *Mart.* 4,13 and 4,22; cf. *Mart.* 10,38 (bed as witness of marriage); *Ov. met.* 1,353; *Prop.* 4,11,85 (new marriage).

<sup>46</sup> Marital beds were called, e.g., *lectus / torus genialis, matrimonialis lectulus* (*Cic. Cluent.* 14; *Ps. Quint. decl.* 1,13; *Plin. paneg.* 8).

<sup>47</sup> *Lucan.* 5,799-810; *Ov. am.* 2,10,17. Cf. *Catull.* 66,15-20.

<sup>48</sup> *Verg. Aen.* 8,412; *Val. Fl.* 2,137.

<sup>49</sup> *Iuv.* 6,21-2; *Prop.* 3,20,25-6; *Catull.* 6.

<sup>50</sup> Center of repose: *Catull.* 31,1-25; *Cic. Catil.* 4,2; *otium*: *Mart.* 10,30,17; *Plin. epist.* 9,7,4;

*Bedding and bedroom furniture*

Elaborate bedding was used mainly by the elite, but not limited only to them. Covers, pillows and bolsters were varied and the vocabulary reflected this diversity.<sup>51</sup> The verb for preparing a bed is *sterno*, which in many cases seems to be used in the context of preparing couches for reclining at dinner,<sup>52</sup> implying that the dining room couches were not furnished with covers/pillows other times of the day. On the other hand in the context of a bedroom, it seems to denote a bed made purposefully for someone.<sup>53</sup> Beds made for certain occasions -such as death beds- may have been more elaborately made than the nightly berths.<sup>54</sup> Decorating a bed with, for instance, leaves, was not unknown.<sup>55</sup> Bed coverings were also suitable gifts.<sup>56</sup>

Even though austerity in sleeping arrangements was considered a virtue, and the moralist voices were raised against opulence,<sup>57</sup> comfortable, even luxurious furnishings were favored. Lavish sleeping arrangements are not surprising in imperial context or in the houses of the elite, and fine bed / couch covers were even used as a means of showing off.<sup>58</sup> However, relatively comfortable furnishings could have been found occasionally in humbler locations.<sup>59</sup>

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*secretum*: Sen. *epist.* 72,2 (yet, from him we learn the opposite as well, a bed made for display: Sen. *dial.* 9,1,59).

<sup>51</sup> E.g., words just for a cushion: *cervical*, Isid. *orig.* 19,26; Mart. 14,150; *culcita*, Suet. *Claud.* 35; *pulvinus*, Suet. *Otho* 11,1; Ov. *epist.* 18,195; *pulvillus*, Apul. *met.* 10,20; or for bed covering: *cadurcum*, Iuv. 7,221; *cubicularia polymita*, *gausapina*, Mart. 14,150; *lodix*, Mart. 14,146-8; *pallium*, Prop. 4,8; *stragulum*, Suet. *Claud.* 35; Plin. *nat.* 8,226; Suet. *Nero* 47,3; *stroma*, Hist. Aug. *Ver.* 4,9; *tapete*, Liv. 40,24,7; *vestis*, Petron. 26. etc.

<sup>52</sup> E.g., Plaut. *Stich.* 2,2,33; Cic. *Mur.* 75.

<sup>53</sup> Ter. *Haut.* 5,1,902-3; Plin. *epist.* 7,27,4.

<sup>54</sup> Val. Max. 2,6,8 (set in Greek context).

<sup>55</sup> Plin. *nat.* 20,152 (medical purposes); Plin. *nat.* 24,59 (Greek custom); cf. Hist. Aug. *Car.* 17,3.

<sup>56</sup> Mart. 14,146-62.

<sup>57</sup> Hist. Aug. *Aur.* 2,6; Amm. 22,4,6; Cic. *Phil.* 2,67.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., Hor. *epod.* 8; Mart. 10,14,6; Hist. Aug. *Ael.* 5,6-10; Hist. Aug. *Heliog.* 19,1 and 20,4-9 (Catull. 64); showing off: Mart. 2,16.

<sup>59</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 2,67; Suet. *Vit.* 16.

Other Roman bedroom furniture consists mainly of seats, which seem to have been easily movable and placed in rooms when needed.<sup>60</sup> Beds also served for seating.<sup>61</sup> Other pieces of furniture were different kind of repositories (keeping one's personal and valuable objects in the bedroom is also known in the literature), lamps<sup>62</sup> and chamber pots (*matellae*) which were not necessarily present in bedchambers, but brought in by slaves, summoned by snapping fingers,<sup>63</sup> and possibly footstools of different sizes as well as tables and tableware.<sup>64</sup> Riggsby also claims that *cubiculum* was an appropriate place for display of art works,<sup>65</sup> and while certain sources do confirm that decorating bedrooms was not unknown, some of the literary passages suggest that hiding precious art in private chambers was actually frowned upon.<sup>66</sup>

As I have argued already earlier, the Roman use of elaborate beds and bedding resemble the characteristics of sleeping habits attributed to modern societies in anthropological research.<sup>67</sup> This evidence also challenges the proposition by Ekirch, who claims that European beds developed from pallets and mats during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>68</sup>

### *Surroundings of sleep*

One of the research questions is how the quality of sleep is affected by the environment, the temperature, lighting and sounds.<sup>69</sup> The literary evidence reveals

<sup>60</sup> Cato *agr.* 10,4; Sen. *clem.* 1,9,7; Val. Max. 2,5,2.

<sup>61</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 11,1; Cic. *rep.* 1,17.

<sup>62</sup> See below, n. 73.

<sup>63</sup> Storage, e.g., Plin. *epist.* 2,17; Suet. *Tib.* 43; cf. Ps. Quint. *decl.* 1,3; Tac. *ann.* 15,55 and Prop. 3,6; see also Riggsby 1997, 42, n. 40. Books in bed, Hor. *epod.* 8 and Hist. Aug. *Ael.* 5,6-10 (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 43-4). Pots: Mart. 14,119 and 6,89; cf. bedwetting theme in a Pompeian inscription: *CIL* IV 4957.

<sup>64</sup> Footstools are known especially in the context of dining, Varro *ling.* 5,35,167; Ov. *ars* 2, 211 and evidence for tables comes from Apuleius (*met.* 2,15).

<sup>65</sup> Riggsby 1997, 38.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. Plin. *nat.* 34,62; Suet. *Nero* 19,3 and 25.

<sup>67</sup> Nissinen 2012, 3, 9; Worthmann – Melby 2002, 106.

<sup>68</sup> Ekirch 2005, 274. Whether there was an actual discontinuation in the use of real beds in the Middle Ages, would be an interesting research question for a Mediaevalist.

<sup>69</sup> Galinier *et al.* 2010, 823.

that Roman sleeping areas were designed to be dim, but placed so that natural light could be used in the mornings.<sup>70</sup> *Caecum* (blind), *opacum* (shady) and *obscurum* (obscure) were words associated with *cubicula*,<sup>71</sup> yet light might enter through a window or the cracks in the shutters.<sup>72</sup>

Artificial light, provided by lamps and torches as well as wax and tall candles, was used to continue the day into the night.<sup>73</sup> If only these lamps could speak to us, they would also shed light on the actions taking place in bedrooms.<sup>74</sup> Bringing light into a dark room is a recurring theme in literature;<sup>75</sup> suspense can be created by an interplay of light and dark; the secrets of darkness are revealed by the flickering light.<sup>76</sup>

In addition, the wealthiest Romans preferred peaceful bedchambers and demanded silence in sleeping areas.<sup>77</sup> *Cubicula* were designed for quietude, contrasting the busy and noisy public life and demands of such social duties as hosting banquets.<sup>78</sup> This, in my opinion, further confirms that Romans desired privacy, but also underlines the fact that it was achievable mainly by the elite members of society.

Even though, for some, the chosen sleeping areas were quiet, sleep could be interrupted in numerous ways; noisemakers included barking dogs, slaves and even schoolmasters.<sup>79</sup> A wealthy houseowner could require the servants to quiet down, yet unsolicited intimacy was created even in elite living quarters, as attested by Cicero who heard his neighbor snoring in the night! And as he states,

<sup>70</sup> Instructions on locating bedrooms: Vitr. 1,2,7 and 6,4,1. References to dimness: Tac. *ann.* 14,8; Hist. Aug. *Tac.* 4,7; Iuv. 7,105; Plin. *epist.* 5,6,22.

<sup>71</sup> Varro *ling.* 9,58; Plin. *epist.* 7,21; Sen. *epist.* 82,14. The *obscurum* in Suet. *Tit.* 1,1 seems to be figurative.

<sup>72</sup> Pers. 3,1-2; Prop. 1,3.

<sup>73</sup> Apul. *met.* 4,19 (see also Apul. *met.* 2,24-6 and 10,20). Sources closer to Roman Italy, e.g., Cic. *div.* 1,79 and 40; Mart. 14,39; Prop. 2,15.

<sup>74</sup> Mart. 10,38; Amm. 25,4,6.

<sup>75</sup> E.g., Tac. *ann.* 14,44; Ps. Quint. *decl.* 2,19; Val. Max. 1,7,7; Ov. *fast.* 2,352-3.

<sup>76</sup> Phaedr. 3,10,25-30.

<sup>77</sup> Plin. *epist.* 2,17, 22-5; Sen. *epist.* 56, 6-7. Cf. Hermen. Celtis *coll.* (M) 12.

<sup>78</sup> Varro *Men.* 319 and 337; Varro *ling.* 9,58; Hist. Aug. *Tac.* 4,7.

<sup>79</sup> Dogs: Iuv. 6,415-23 (cf. Ov. *am.* 2,19,35-45); a slave: Petron. 68; schoolmaster: Mart. 9,68. On Martial's attitude to schoolmasters, see, e.g., Henriksen 2012, 285. See also Prop. 2,19 (shouts in the night). Cf. Iuv. 9, 101-10, for desire for peace and privacy left wanting.

we do not cease hearing even in sleep.<sup>80</sup> The *Lex Iulia Municipalis* suggests that rattling carts produced a noisy nighttime environment.<sup>81</sup> Many city dwellers decided to leave the capital city in search of peace,<sup>82</sup> but the humbler residents had to settle for disturbed night.<sup>83</sup>

Seasonal changes were taken in consideration especially in the building schemes of wealthy villa owners who could boast of having heated bedrooms for winter use.<sup>84</sup> However, in some cases, even the rich and powerful suffered from the cold in their bedrooms.<sup>85</sup> Not only cold but also heat troubled sleepers; ways of dealing with it were for example sleeping with the bedroom doors open, sleeping outside and fanning.<sup>86</sup>

### *Security matters: control and protection of sleeping areas*

The degree of seclusion in Roman sleeping areas was high, as is revealed by the many references to doors and closing in texts.<sup>87</sup> Bedrooms could and should be and indeed were closed to maintain privacy. An invitation was, in many cases, needed for getting into a bedroom<sup>88</sup> and entering bedchambers without permission seems to have been disapproved.<sup>89</sup> Admittance was usually based on famil-

<sup>80</sup> Cic. *Att.* 4,3,4; Cic. *nat. deor.* 2,143-4.

<sup>81</sup> *Lex Iul. munic.* 64 (see also 52).

<sup>82</sup> Hor. *epist.* 1,17,6 and 2,2,79; Mart. 12,57.

<sup>83</sup> Iuv. 3,232-41.

<sup>84</sup> Cic. *ad Q. fr.* 3,1,2; Plin. *epist.* 2,17 and 5,6,23.

<sup>85</sup> Aur. Fronto p. 85 v.d.H.

<sup>86</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 82.

<sup>87</sup> See Nissinen 2009, 91; Plaut. *Stich.* 308-10; Apul. *met.* 1.7-15; Catull. 66,15-20; Verg. *Aen.* 4,134-5; Ov. *ars* 3,223-30; Hist. Aug. *Heliog.* 14,5-7: curtain.

<sup>88</sup> Vitr. 6,5; Nissinen 2009, 91. In addition, neutral verbs (*perventum*: Verg. *georg.* 4,374), implying invitation (*ducitur*: Ov. *met.* 10,456-60), violent (*inrumpunt*: Verg. *Aen.* 6,515-30). Slightly more ambiguous are such expressions as *invado* (Verg. *Aen.* 6,623) or *offendo* (Gell. 19,10,1). The same word could be used for a familiar person rushing into a bedchamber or as evidence of forcing a way as in Suet. *Claud.* 37: *Narcissus ..... patroni cubiculum inrupit / inrumpere Appius nuntiatius. Intro* could be used either in the neutral sense of entering or for a forcing way in (see, e.g., Liv. 7,39). Forceful entries in, e.g., Petron. 11; Tac. *ann.* 1,39 (also Apul. *met.* 1.7-15, 4,18-9).

<sup>89</sup> Hier. *epist.* 22; cf. Ov. *ars* 3,223-30 hinting how a closed bedroom provided seclusion for sleepers even if there were others awake in the house.

ilarity, and it seems that family members had easy access to each other's rooms.<sup>90</sup> Nonetheless, the elaborate closing systems and physical security of houses were not always enough to keep intruders away and forceful entries were known to take place. The possibility of falling victim to murder was a real one; several texts reveal murders and manslaughter taking place in the night and even in the assumed safety of one's *cubiculum*.<sup>91</sup> In addition, fires and apartments made of flimsy materials made sleeping dangerous for the less affluent Romans and appealing for neighborly help was used as a way of safeguarding sleepers.<sup>92</sup>

Boundaries were also needed to regulate love affairs and to keep eager lovers outside.<sup>93</sup> Slaves and servants might have helped lovers by assisting in moving about the bedrooms as well as with the regulation of space by announcing visitors, carrying messages and guarding.<sup>94</sup>

## With whom the Romans slept

### *Cosleeping adults*

One of the main aims in sleep research is to figure out the relationship between solitary sleeping and cosleeping and clarify the ways of cosleeping: do children and their parents share a bedroom, are partners sleeping together or are other types of solutions, for example, several adults sharing a sleeping area, employed. As has been shown in previous scholarship, cosleeping with one's partner was typical for Romans but separate sleeping occurred in certain specific situations.<sup>95</sup> Based on the evidence, it can be asserted that urban Romans, especially members of the upper class, chose their bedfellows carefully, and communal sleeping as such was not practiced in the *domus*.

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<sup>90</sup> Cic. *Sull.* 52 (cf. Nep. *Dion* 9 in non-Roman setting); Suet. *Nero* 34; Ov. *epist.* 12,62 (mythological setting).

<sup>91</sup> Riggsby 1997, 39-40.

<sup>92</sup> Iuv. 3,5-10, 3,190-211 and 15,151-59.

<sup>93</sup> Hor. *carm.* 1,25; Ov. *am.* 2,19; of this "shut-out lover" motif, see more in Canter 1920, 355-68.

<sup>94</sup> Tac. *ann.* 13,44; Ov. *epist.* 21,19-20; Petron. 129.

<sup>95</sup> See Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 113; Anguissola 2010, 43; Nissinen 2012, 17-8.



The chosen bedfellow for a Roman was the spouse or lover.<sup>96</sup> Other types of cosleeping arrangements are also known, for instance, adult family members and even in-laws occasionally shared a bedroom.<sup>97</sup> These accounts are often used to emphasize the virtuous nature of certain people, e.g., an adult daughter sleeping aside with her mother is displayed as a model of filial duty and a widow who refuses to remarry and decides to share the bedroom with her mother-in-law embodies the moral model for a Roman woman (*univira*<sup>98</sup>). Sometimes the bed is shared with a dog. This habit is not a modern concept, but already known in antiquity.<sup>99</sup> Otherwise, adult humans might have shared sleeping areas in such special contexts as the military or traveling, or possibly even in a temple attending a service of god.<sup>100</sup>

Sharing a bed usually reveals an intimate relationship between the users.<sup>101</sup> Lovers even share narrow beds<sup>102</sup> and some texts hint that preferred sides were established.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the bed might become more crowded when a couple shares not only the bed, but also a lover.<sup>104</sup>

Couples might have slept separately in order to follow religious rites and to obtain purity.<sup>105</sup> This practice seems to have vexed the lovers who were thus left alone.<sup>106</sup> Accounts of spouses or lovers sleeping apart reveal a variety of

<sup>96</sup> E.g. *Iuv.* 6,114-24; *Mart.* 4,13, 8,44, and 10,38; *Plaut. Amph.* 513; *Prop.* 1,8B.

<sup>97</sup> *Hier. epist.* 108, 27-8 (adult daughter and mother); *Val. Max.* 4,3,3 (in-laws); *Cic. S. Rosc.* 65 (father and his adolescent sons).

<sup>98</sup> See more, e.g., in Lightman – William 1977, 19-32.

<sup>99</sup> *Mart.* 1,109; *Prop.* 4,3.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Nissinen 2012, 5 for military. Travels, e.g., *Mart.* 3,91; *Apul. met.* 1.6-15 and 1.7-15; in *Cic. inv.* 2,14-15 and 2,43, two men decide to share a bedroom in an inn, since they have made friends during the journey. *Suet. Aug.* 94: matrons gathered for attending a service of Apollo. Of "incubation", see more, e.g., in Graf 2015.

<sup>101</sup> E.g., in *Plaut. Most.* 320-30; *Plaut. Poen.* 695; *Plaut. Amph.* 806-8 (cf. *Amph.* 513).

<sup>102</sup> *Prop.* 1,8b,33 (see also *Prop.* 3,10 and 3,21).

<sup>103</sup> *Lucan.* 5,809-10. Cf. *Prop.* 4,3; *Hor. epod.* 3,22; *Ov. am.* 2,10; *Mart.* 3,91.

<sup>104</sup> *Mart.* 12,91.

<sup>105</sup> *Tib.* 1,3,25-6; cf. *Ov. am.* 3,9,34 and 3,10,1-16; *Ov. fast.* 2,328; *Liv.* 39,10; *Prop.* 2,33.

<sup>106</sup> *Prop.* 1,12,14; cf. *Prop.* 2,33c.

marital problems, such as quarrels and unwanted partners,<sup>107</sup> and remind us how personal preferences have played their part in sleeping arrangements as well.

The Roman *domus* were inhabited by large *familiae*, which included not only the nuclear family, but servants, slaves and free(d), as well.<sup>108</sup> According to the social sciences, certain normative rules dictating sleeping areas can be detected.<sup>109</sup> For instance, Schwartz argues that among families, individuals are often assigned a place to sleep corresponding to their authority.<sup>110</sup> Based on the sources,<sup>111</sup> I contend that the hierarchy within families and the social status of the inhabitants played a part in Roman sleeping arrangements as well; it seems reasonable to assume that the head of the household had the final say in the matter.

In earlier research, a *cubiculum* has been interpreted as a space used not only by the elite members of the household, but populated by the servants of the house as well,<sup>112</sup> even though certain scholars do acknowledge the relative privacy of *cubicula*.<sup>113</sup> Slaves were obviously allowed in *cubiculum* to perform their duties<sup>114</sup> but dismissed when privacy was needed.<sup>115</sup> What is important to note, is that that household slaves on duty at night seem to have been stationed *outside* the master bedroom (but within earshot), rather than sleeping inside,<sup>116</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Disregard: Cic. *Att.* 5,1; Suet. *Tib.* 7; possibility of adultery: Catull. 61,101-5; unattractive partner: Mart. 11,23. Nocturnal quarreling: e.g., Iuv. 6, 34-5.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *contubernium* in TLL, vol. IV, p. 791, lin. 52 - p. 794, lin. 11 and *contubernalis* TLL, vol. IV, p. 789, lin. 64 - p. 791, lin. 46. On the nature of *contubernales* in Pliny, see, e.g., Gibson – Morello 2012, 140 and on the social status of, e.g., wet nurses, see Bradley 1986.

<sup>109</sup> See especially Aubert – White 1959, 13-15.

<sup>110</sup> Schwartz 1970, 496.

<sup>111</sup> E.g., Cic. *Verr. II* 5, 93-4; Cic. *div.* 1,59 (see also Sen. *epist.* 56, 6-7).

<sup>112</sup> See, e.g., Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 78.

<sup>113</sup> Riggsby 1997; Anguissola 2010.

<sup>114</sup> E.g. Cic. *Verr.* 2,5,27; Cic. *rep.* 1,18; Suet. *Dom.* 17; Val. Max. 1,7,7 and 3,2,15; Hermen. *Celtis coll. (M)* 2 for servant(s) assisting a child with morning routines.

<sup>115</sup> Sen. *dial.* 6,22,6; Sen. *clem.* 1,9,7; Plin. *epist.* 1,12.

<sup>116</sup> Ov. *ars* 2,260; Apul. *met.* 2,15; Ps. Quint. *decl.* 1,3; Sil. 1,66 and Ov. *met.* 10,380-5 (servants staying on threshold); Plin. *epist.* 6,16,13 and *Dig.* 29,5,3,2 (slaves are in reach of their masters, but do not sleep in the same bedroom). Cf. also a special watch-keeping duty of the so-called *excubiae* (lying down outside while on guard); in an imperial and regal context: Curt. 8,6,18 and 8,6,22; Suet. *Galba* 10,3; in a private house: Tac. *ann.* 14,4,4. Cf. also accounts where force is necessary

which, in my opinion, yet again attests to the desire for privacy on the part of the Roman masters, overlooked in earlier research. Slaves were expected to keep silent if so ordered,<sup>117</sup> demonstrating how peace and quiet in bedchambers were sought after by the elite masters.

Persons who could be found in the vicinity of the master and his bedroom were his doctor and chamberlain (*cubicularius*) and it seems that the *cubicularius* might have been in control of access to the master and was expected to guard his master.<sup>118</sup> However, the full role of a *cubicularius* remains somewhat uncertain; the name is seldom mentioned in Republican texts and later, in the imperial era, *cubicularius* and similar terms derived from *cubiculum* were used for imperial functionaries rather than servants in a private household.<sup>119</sup> The texts do not really give away whether the *cubicularius* actually slept *inside* the bedroom with his master.

Servants had, unsurprisingly, less freedom to decide their sleeping arrangements and their sleeping conditions varied, being sometimes really uncomfortable.<sup>120</sup> In many cases, the movement and living quarters of slaves were tightly controlled and the opportunity of choosing a bed fellow was limited.<sup>121</sup> Ideal slaves should remember their duties even in their sleep.<sup>122</sup> Illness seems to have been a suitable excuse for slaves to stay in bed, at least if Plautus<sup>123</sup> is to be believed and slaves who slept well were even favored by some masters.<sup>124</sup> A topos of insouciant and carefree slaves, who sleep well no matter what troubles

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for entering the bedroom: Ps. Quint. *decl.* 2,19; Bell. *Afr.* 88. Summoning a slave: Mart. 14,119 and 6,89; Plin. *epist.* 9,36.

<sup>117</sup> Sen. *epist.* 56; Hermen. Celtis *coll. (M)* 12.

<sup>118</sup> *TLL*, vol. IV, p. 1265, lin. 35 - p. 1266, lin. 25 (of the role of a *cubicularius*, especially Char. *gramm.* I 76, 21, Alf; *Dig.* 50, 16, 203; Cic. *Att.* 6,2,5); cf. *ostiarius* in Hermen. Celtis *coll. (M)* 12 6.

<sup>119</sup> Rolfe 1963, 35 and *TLL*, IV, 1267, 68 (e.g. Suet. *Dom.* 16; Amm. 14,10,5 and 16,7; Cod. Theod. 6,8,1, 11,18,1 and 10,10,34). See also a rare occurrence in a private house: Quint. *decl.* 328.

<sup>120</sup> See, e.g., Colum. 1,6; Hor. *sat.* 1,8,8; Nissinen 2012, 13, 22.

<sup>121</sup> E.g., in villas, see Cato *agr.* 5: everyone had their own place to sleep and the overseer kept watch. See also Colum. 8,11 and 8,14; Varro *rust.* 1,13,2. In Cato *agr.* 13 free servants slept on a shared bed in the pressing room and slave slept with oil-pressers.

<sup>122</sup> Plaut. *Aul.* 591.

<sup>123</sup> Plaut. *Cas.* prologus 35-40.

<sup>124</sup> Plut. *Vit. Cat. Mai.* 21.

might disturb the master, is not uncommon.<sup>125</sup> Totally contrasting stories are the ones which tell of slaves who are murdered in private houses or are killed in their master's stead.<sup>126</sup>

### *Sleeping arrangements for children*

It seems that the best place in a Roman house to rear newborns was assessed case-specifically; a place for an infant was prepared in a room which best met the requirements outlined by the medical authorities. According to Soranos, the sleeping area for an infant should be warm enough, but well ventilated and protected with mosquito nets.<sup>127</sup> In addition, Soranos claims that in order to avoid suffocation, babies should not sleep in the same bed with their carers, but in a crib which should be placed alongside the nurse's bed, so that the child is as close to the adult as possible - a view on cosleeping which is later repeated by some of his modern counterparts. Otherwise, he gives instructions to furnish cribs with moderately soft mattresses, depressed in the middle, in order to keep the baby from rolling out, and to stuff mattresses with leaves to yield a nice scent.<sup>128</sup>

Roman babies slept in cribs called *cunae* and (*in*)*cunabula*, which could be used as synonyms.<sup>129</sup> *Cunae* were movable objects; the rocking was important, as we know, for example, from the instructions to nurses.<sup>130</sup> Wickerwork baskets (bassinets) were used as well, as is attested by certain works of art.<sup>131</sup> *Incunabula* also seem to denote a specific area for rearing children (nursery),<sup>132</sup> though the word clearly appears more often metaphorically as the origin or beginning of things or as symbol of infancy. Infants were guarded by the appropri-

<sup>125</sup> Ps. Quint. *decl.* 2,19; Mart. 9,92. See also Plaut. *Asin.* 430.

<sup>126</sup> Cic. *Cluent.* 64,179; Val. Max. 6,8,5-6.

<sup>127</sup> Sor. *Gyn.* 2,16.

<sup>128</sup> Sor. *Gyn.* 2,37. E.g., The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends room-sharing without bed-sharing (Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome 2011).

<sup>129</sup> *Cunabula*, *TLL*, vol. IV, p. 1388, lin. 40 - p. 1389, lin. 64, *cunae*, *TLL*, vol. IV, p. 1389, lin. 65 - p. 1390, lin. 52, *incunabula*, *TLL*, vol. VII 1, p. 1077, lin. 62 - p. 1078, lin. 59.

<sup>130</sup> E.g., Sor. *Gyn.* 2,40; cf. Fest. p. 194; Plut. *Mor.* fr. 96.

<sup>131</sup> Coulon 1994, 47-8. See also Sorabella 2007, 353-72.

<sup>132</sup> Cic. *fin.* 5,20; cf. *nutrimentorum locus* in Suet. *Aug.* 6.

ate goddess *Cunina*, and crying babies were soothed by lullabies.<sup>133</sup> Children might have been taken care of by nurses rather than their mothers - a practice disdained by certain noblemen- even though also mothers are known to be the primary carers of infants.<sup>134</sup>

In wealthy families infants slept in luxurious furnishings and were visited by close friends of the family.<sup>135</sup> It has been suggested in some studies that only the wealthiest families had separate beds for infants (cradles) and in poorer families children slept with their parents or nurses.<sup>136</sup>

Albeit the evidence is sparse, it seems to me that the older children of affluent families as well as the imperial children could have slept in separate bedchambers. They were also assisted by teachers/carers in the mornings when they were expected to go and greet their parents.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, cosleeping between parents and their children<sup>138</sup> as well as among siblings is known from some sources.<sup>139</sup> On some occasions older children were sleeping under the watchful eyes of their parents,<sup>140</sup> and sometimes without any supervision whatsoever.<sup>141</sup> *Paedagogium* is a word used for the sleeping quarters of young slave boys, even though the term is fairly rare.<sup>142</sup>

In the light of this evidence, it can be argued that children were taken into consideration in arranging sleeping in the Roman domestic space, which

<sup>133</sup> Lact. *inst.* 1,20,36; Aug. *civ.* 4,8; Pers. 3,18; cf. Cic. *Cato* 83; Arnob. *nat.* 7,32: *nenia*.

<sup>134</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 94 (*nutricula*); Auson. 164, 9 (mother). On the moralist judgments regarding mothers not nursing and rearing infants themselves, see especially Tac. *dial.* 28,4: *Nam pridem suus cuique filius, ex casta parente natus, non in cellula emptae nutricis, sed gremio ac sinu matris educabatur, cuius praecipua laus erat tueri domum et inservire liberis* and Gell. 12,1: *Quod est enim hoc contra naturam imperfectum atque dimidiatum matris genus, peperisse ac statim a sese abiecisse... non alere nunc suo lacte*. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 10 and Rawson 2003, 216.

<sup>135</sup> Iuv. 6,88-9; Ov. *Pont.* 2,3,72. Cf. Rawson 2003, 108-9.

<sup>136</sup> Coulon 1994, 47-8.

<sup>137</sup> Tac. *ann.* 11,11 and 12,68,2 (imperial context); Quint. *decl.* 328 (adolescent brothers); Hermen. Celtis *coll. (M)* 2 (private house, assisting servants).

<sup>138</sup> Sen. *contr.* 7,5,1.

<sup>139</sup> Cic. *Cael.* 36; Plin. *epist.* 7,27,12-5 (servile context); Apul. *met.* 4,26 (among cousins, relevance to Roman sleeping arrangements is doubtful).

<sup>140</sup> Phaed. 3,10,21; cf. Aug. *serm.* 105A 774,12.

<sup>141</sup> Petron. 86,5-6.

<sup>142</sup> Plin. 7,27,13.

coincides well with the idea on recent research of Roman families, especially done by B. Rawson who affirms that children were welcome, valued and visible in Roman society.<sup>143</sup>

### **When Romans slept: scheduling sleep**

#### *Morning*

Societies without alarm clocks have relied on cockerels to announce the dawn.<sup>144</sup> Humble farmers as well as servants of wealthier houses were aroused from sleep and set to work by the crowing of the cocks. Servants had the duty to wake up their masters and assist in the morning rituals, which consisted mainly of the toilette and dressing.<sup>145</sup> Other morning activities could include reading and writing.<sup>146</sup>

Even though slaves were ordered to wake up their masters, in Roman thinking it was the noble men who were given credit for rising early.<sup>147</sup> Sleeping late was scorned and stories which emphasized the indolence of masters were used as means of vilifying opponents.<sup>148</sup> Regulating the sleeping schedule in houses depended on the wishes and needs of the master. Augustus is said to have found the early rising displeasing, especially if he had been interrupted in the night (he often stayed awake at night, and preferred to have company at that time), he liked to sleep a bit later in the morning, yet even he is said to have confined his hours of sleep to seven at most. If he had some duties to perform early in the morning, he would stay overnight at some friends, who lived close to where he was heading in the morning.<sup>149</sup> A good father -according to Seneca-

<sup>143</sup> Rawson 2010, 1.

<sup>144</sup> E.g., Cic. *Mur.* 22; Lucr. 4,710-1.

<sup>145</sup> On farm: Moret. 1. Slaves in private houses: Hermen. Celtis *coll. (M)* 2, 12 (especially, *in galli cantu excitare me*). For the discussion of the origins of this collection of bilingual school books known as *Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana*, see Dickey 2012. Ablutions and toilette, e.g., Prop. 3,10; Ov. *ars* 3,223-30.

<sup>146</sup> Aur. Fronto p.61-62 v.d.H.

<sup>147</sup> Dowden 2003, 140-50.

<sup>148</sup> Cic. *Att.* 10,13; cf. Pers. 3,1-11.

<sup>149</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 72 and 78. Cf. Schwartz 1970, 493 on sleeping "under another roof". See also Cic.

ordered that his children be woken up early, so they would not waste time in taking up their studies.<sup>150</sup> Sleeping until daybreak was a pleasure for some, but it could not always be achieved in the busy capital city. Horace, for instance, acknowledged the burdens which came along with ambition and enjoyed the fact that he did not have to get up early.<sup>151</sup>

One special feature of Roman society was the *salutatio*, a ritualized morning greeting where free Roman citizens visited their wealthy patrons. The nature of this institution and the *patronus-cliens* relationship has been debated in numerous studies.<sup>152</sup> The importance for sleep research of looking at this custom is to find out how this practice shaped the use of space in the early mornings.

It has been debated whether a *cubiculum* was a place for reception in general. The evidence for bedrooms being used during morning greetings is indefinite.<sup>153</sup> There are certain passages which do seem to imply the existence of this practice, e.g., the elder Pliny's (*nat.* 15,38) otherwise ambiguous mention of *virorum salutatorium cubiculum*.<sup>154</sup> It seems, however, that the whole household was not always up when the greetings took place.<sup>155</sup>

*Salutatio* occurred in the early morning in the first hours of the day or even before sunrise to the displeasure of some.<sup>156</sup> The poet Martial especially found the early rising a nuisance, and wished to be able to sleep late instead of waking up and toiling to get to his patron(s), sometimes only to find his efforts in vain.<sup>157</sup> He ended up leaving Rome to escape the stressful life of a client. It

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*Verr. II* 5, 93-4 for regulating the schedule.

<sup>150</sup> *Sen. dial.* 1,2,5.

<sup>151</sup> *Hor. sat.* 1,6,115-32; cf. *Hor. epist.* 1,17,6. Cf. *Tac. dial.* 13,6.

<sup>152</sup> Recent approaches, e.g., Goldbeck 2010 and Speksnijder 2015.

<sup>153</sup> On differing views in earlier research, see e.g. Nissinen 2009, 89-90, cf. also Goldbeck 2010, 143-4 on *cubicula* during *salutatio*.

<sup>154</sup> See also *Cic. off.* 3,112 (also *Val. Max.* 5,4,3 and *Liv. perioch.* 7) for a possible, yet uncertain account of morning *salutatio*.

<sup>155</sup> However, the evidence for this is meager, see *Hier. epist.* 22.

<sup>156</sup> *Mart.* 4,8 and 12,29; *Iuv.* 3,127-30. On the duration of *salutatio* see, e.g., Laurence 1994, 125.

<sup>157</sup> *Mart.* 4,26 and 5,22.

is quite clear what he wished to do instead: *Quid concupiscam quaeris ergo? dormire*.<sup>158</sup> The desire for rest is a recurring theme in his writings.<sup>159</sup>

On the other hand, uncaring patrons also appear in the sources. Seneca and Cicero for example moralize on the patrons who, due to sleep, self-indulgence or impoliteness avoid their clients or let them wait long time only to greet them half-asleep and hungover from yesterday's feasting, if they show up at all.<sup>160</sup>

### *Daytime resting: siesta and convalescence*

Climate and seasonal changes played an important role in the Roman sleeping arrangements. The practice of siesta<sup>161</sup> or biphasic sleeping culture is known, for instance, in warm Mediterranean countries.<sup>162</sup> The habit of daytime napping in ancient times has been questioned by T. Wiedemann in his article *The Roman Siesta* where he discusses whether people actually slept or not during the siesta.<sup>163</sup> However, even if people did not always sleep during the siesta, it does not speak against the siesta culture as a midday resting period, which is clearly attested in the Latin texts.<sup>164</sup> The language of midday napping derived from the word *meridies* (midday) and consists of such terms as *meridio* and *meridiatio*.<sup>165</sup>

Daily routines differed according to season as, for instance, Pliny's letters reveal.<sup>166</sup> During summer, he was engaged in literary activities during most of the day in his villa, but has nap in the afternoon. His schedule is otherwise the same in wintertime but he needs less sleep both in the daytime and at night. Climate had an impact on napping: daytime rest is especially connected to the hot summertime. From Pliny we also learn the differentiation between *cubicula*

<sup>158</sup> Mart. 7,39; Mart. 12,18 and 12,68; Mart. 10,74.

<sup>159</sup> Mart. 7,42, 1,71 and 10,47 (cf. 2,90).

<sup>160</sup> Sen. *dial.* 10,14,3-4; Cic. *Planc.* 66.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Spanish *siesta*, derived from Latin *sexta (hora)*, sixth (hour).

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Brunt – Steger 2003, 16-20.

<sup>163</sup> Wiedemann 2003, 130-1.

<sup>164</sup> E.g., Cic. *de orat.* 3,17; Suet. *Aug.* 78; *Domit.* 16.

<sup>165</sup> Suet. *Nero* 6,4; Cic. *div.* 2,142,2; Catull. 32.

<sup>166</sup> See Gibson – Morello 2012, 118 for a more detailed timetable and discussion on the models for Pliny the Younger's daily routines. See also Varro *rust.* 1,2,6.



*diurna* and *nocturna*. Whether these diurnal *cubicula* were meant for napping, receiving guests or both is unfortunately left open.<sup>167</sup>

It was not necessary to sleep during the siesta, but other activities, such as bathing could take place then, as R. Laurence points out.<sup>168</sup> Literary activities and conversations could also take place on siesta time, as well as sexual encounters.<sup>169</sup>

Daytime sleeping was not always part of a respectable siesta regime. The Roman writers pay special attention to disgraceful behavior and condemn the carousers who doze off during the daytime, or pass out at dinners.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, though dining rooms were not meant for sleeping, partygoers passing out on dining couches were not an uncommon sight.<sup>171</sup> Sleeping (even feigned) in public could also be used as a means of avoiding unwanted social interaction.<sup>172</sup>

Otherwise daytime sleeping occurred during convalescence, when resting was necessary. As a peaceful and silent space, a *cubiculum* was most suitable place for the sick.<sup>173</sup> All of the abovementioned terms for beds, *lectulus*, *lectus*, *grabatus* and *cubile* as well as *torus*, could be used for a sickbed.<sup>174</sup> Descriptions of medical experts as well as friends and family members attending the bedside are also fairly numerous. One specific context is a visit to a sick friend or colleague,<sup>175</sup> which is yet another topos or cultural phenomenon in the Roman world, expressing the liminality between public and private. Even

<sup>167</sup> Plin. *epist.* 1,3, 9,36, 7,4 and 40.

<sup>168</sup> Laurence 1994, 128-31 (ancient sources e.g. Suet. *Dom.* 16,2; Iuv. 11,205; Mart. 10,48).

<sup>169</sup> Conversation: Aur. Fronto p. 62, 19-20 v.d.H; erotic: Catull. 32.

<sup>170</sup> Hor. *sat.* 1,3,15-20; Iuv. 8,9-12; see also Quint. *inst.* 4,1,73 (nodding judge); Suet. *Cal.* 38,4 (customer at an auction).

<sup>171</sup> E.g., Plaut. *Curc.* 358-68; Mart. 3,82.

<sup>172</sup> Ov. *am.* 2,5,13; Ov. *ars* 3,767; Ov. *rem.* 499; Ov. *epist.* 21,199 (see also n. 237 below).

<sup>173</sup> Plin. *epist.* 1,12,7, 1,22,4 and 3,16; Suet. *Claud.* 35; Suet. *Aug.* 98-100; Tac. *ann.* 15,45; Apul. *flor.* 23; Apul. *met.* 6,1 and 6,21; Aug. *serm. ed. Mai* 1, pag. 469, linea 23; Ps. Quint. *decl.* 8,22. Cf. Riggsby 1997, 37.

<sup>174</sup> Rhet. Her. 3, 20, 33; Val. Max. 5,2 ext.4; Cels. e.g. 1,3; Aur. Fronto p. 82 v.d.H; Plaut. *Cas.* 38; Varro *Men.* 44; Ps. Quint. *decl.* 8,7 (cf. *scimpodion* in Gell. 19,10,1).

<sup>175</sup> Doctors: Apul. *flor.* 23; Aug. *serm. ed. Mai* 229,3; cf. *Dig.* 38,2,14,7; friends and family: Hieron. *epist.* 108, 27-8; Ps. Quint. *decl.* 8,7; Hor. *sat.* 1,80; visiting: Val. Max. 2,5,2; Plin. *epist.* 1,12,7; Suet. *Claud.* 35; Gell. 19,10,1; cf. Suet. *Nero* 34.

emperors might receive guests while lying ill in bed, as did Vespasian, showing how duties trumped the needs of the body.<sup>176</sup>

### *Night-time*

Fear of the dark is a universal phenomenon, and the Romans also had an adverse attitude towards it. The diverse perils of the Roman night were known to be numerous. Darkness veils secrets, smoothes the path for dark deeds, making sleepers especially vulnerable victims to either real dangers or supernatural ones.<sup>177</sup> The special nature of nocturnal activities was acknowledged even in (archaic) Roman legislation.<sup>178</sup>

In private houses, soothing rituals and routines were part of preparing for the night. Romans regarded that the safest bed to sleep in was the one that the sleeper was accustomed to.<sup>179</sup> Certain rituals helped in going to bed; we know that, for instance, guardian deities were placed in Roman bedrooms. Walking alone before going to bed could also have served as a soothing mechanism.<sup>180</sup>

Rituals and confining oneself in the customary bed both point to the need of routines and permanence<sup>181</sup> and, as I have argued earlier, it is very likely that the Romans had permanent sleeping spots in the houses,<sup>182</sup> in contrast to what some scholars seem to suggest.<sup>183</sup>

Other, more mundane, tasks of preparing for the night could include ablutions and changing into nightdress. Roman ladies had their own beauty treat-

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<sup>176</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 24.

<sup>177</sup> Iuv. 3,268: *diversa pericula noctis*. Magic and divine powers, e.g., Ov. *met.* 1,671-3 and 1, 713-9.

<sup>178</sup> Lex XII tab. 1,9, 8,12 and 26. See also Galinier *et al.* 2010, 833.

<sup>179</sup> E.g. Cels. 1,3,9; cf. Ov. *trist.* 3,3,39.

<sup>180</sup> "Going to bed": cf. Plaut. *Most.* 486: *abimus omnes cubitum*; Mart. 10,84 *dormitum ... eat*; Cic. *fam.* 9,26: *me dormitum conferam*; Hor. *sat.* 1,6,119: *eo dormitum*; rituals: Suet. *Aug.* 7; Suet. *Dom.* 21.

<sup>181</sup> See Steger 2004, 415 for the universal elements which facilitate the security of the sleeper. Williams 2008, 642 on facilitating rituals.

<sup>182</sup> Nissinen 2012, 11, see also n. 103 above for possible preferred bed sides.

<sup>183</sup> E.g., Riggsby 1997, 40; Veyne 1987, 73; Dickmann 2010, 71.

ments and makeup routines.<sup>184</sup> The evidence for Roman sleepwear is scarce.<sup>185</sup> It seems that in some earlier periods there was no difference between clothing worn day and night, but later on changing into night clothes was recommended.<sup>186</sup> Suetonius mentions that domestic attire could also be worn in *cubiculum* and Augustine remarks how sleeping half-naked was suitable in bedroom. *Dormitoria*, a word for night clothing is mentioned in the Roman schoolbook known as *Colloquia Monacensia*, but is otherwise rare.<sup>187</sup>

R. Ekirch introduced the idea that in premodern societies, sleeping was divided into intervals called first and second sleep, with a short waking period in between, and that in the ancient Roman context this could be seen in the expression *concubia nocte* for the so-called first sleep.<sup>188</sup> This expression appears in the writings of several Roman authors, yet it seems rather to correspond to the expression "in the dead of night," than to indicate dividing sleep into segments. For instance, in the story found in Cicero (*div.* 1,57), a traveler retires after a dinner. In the dead of night, after a short period of sleep, his friend appears to him in a dream pleading for help. The man wakes up, but not because was be part of his natural sleeping pattern, but because he is startled and frightened by the nocturnal vision.<sup>189</sup> Several of these passages mentioning *concubia nocte* appear in military context,<sup>190</sup> when people were expected to stay awake at night, as while safeguarding the city of Rome.

<sup>184</sup> Mart. 9,37; Ov. *ars* 3,223-30.

<sup>185</sup> As Olson (2003, 201-10) points out, the texts are not very explicit in this matter. See also Prop. 3,21; cf. Prop. 2,29b; cf. Isidore's word for a nightgown, *camisia* (*orig.* 19,22,29), which he connects to a small bed, *cama* (*orig.* 20,11), see above n. 41.

<sup>186</sup> Varro *frag.* *Non.* 541,2; Mart. 9,62 (yet, the interpretation is slightly ambiguous).

<sup>187</sup> Suet. *Vit.* 8. See also Suet. *Aug.* 73 for the *vestis domestica*; Aug. *c. Iul. op. imperf.* 4,44; Hermen. Celtis *coll. (M)* 2; see also Dickey 2012, 141.

<sup>188</sup> Ekirch 2005, 300-1, 137.

<sup>189</sup> Cic. *div.* 1,57: *...Qui ut cenati quiescerent, concubia nocte visum esse in somnis ei.... eum primo perterritum somnio surrexisse; dein cum se collegisset idque visum pro nihilo habendum esse duxisset, recubuisse.* See also Val. Max. 1,7,7; Tac. *hist.* 3,69 (*Sen. contr.* 7,1).

<sup>190</sup> E.g., Enn. *ann.* 165; Sisenna *hist.* 93; Liv. 25,9,8. The first silence of the night in Liv. 7,12 seems to refer to early night, *quies prima* in Ps.Quint. *decl.* 10 seems to denote beginning of the night rather than "first part" of a segmented night, the same as *prima ... nocte* in Petron. 112. Nor do the couple of references to *primo somno* reveal a segmented sleeping pattern (Prop. 1,3,3; Verg. *Aen.* 1,40; Phaedr. 3,10,31).

To look deeper into the division of the times of the day, Varro's treatise on Latin Language offers a thorough overview of the vocabulary. *Crepusculum* is the liminal hour between night and day: *id dubium tempus noctis an diei sit* (ling. 7,77-8). The dead of night would be called *nox intempesta*, which falls between the appearance of the evening star and the sun: *Inter vesperuginem et iubar dicta nox intempesta* (ling. 6,7). *Concubium* is given as a synonym to this expression (since it is the time when people are generally sleeping) alongside *silentium noctis* (since it is the silent hours) and *conticinium*, from *conticesco*, to fall silent. The repeated meaning of *concubium*, *nox intempesta* and *conticinium* is the time of doing nothing except for resting: *tempus agendi est nullum, quod alii concubium appellarunt* (ling. 6,7) and *nox intempesta, quo tempore nihil agitur* (ling. 7,72). *Concubium* is the time for sleep in general: *concubium sit noctis priusquam ad postremum perveneris. / Concubium a concubitu dormiendi causa dictum* (Varro ling. 7,78). In addition, the Roman night was divided into four three-hour periods, *vigiliae*.<sup>191</sup>

The Roman night as a whole was indeed divided into segments, which is reflected in the language, including a variety of expressions for different parts of the night as well as the division of the night into *vigiliae*. However, the vocabulary is used to describe the time-use of those awake at night for one reason or another while others are sleeping, rather than revealing an established system of dividing sleeping into two nocturnal segments. Therefore, even though there are certain sources which seem to better correspond to Ekirch's theory,<sup>192</sup> I must conclude that the segmented nightly sleeping pattern does not appertain to ancient Roman society. Instead, in my opinion, the evidence confirms that the Roman sleeping culture was biphasic, consisting of two main segments: midday resting period and one bout of sleep in the night. The latter, however, could be postponed until a late hour, by working by the lamplight (*lucubratio*).

### *Burning the midnight oil*

*Lucubratio* refers to the practice of working, with an emphasis on conducting literary activities at night in the light of a lamp. Quintilian suggests finding a peaceful place without distractions where it would be easy to concentrate on

<sup>191</sup> See, e.g., Laurence 1994, 123 on the division of time; ancient sources: Hier. *epist.* 140; Plin. *nat.* 7,60,212-5.

<sup>192</sup> Especially Verg. *Aen.* 8,407 (*prima quies*).

writing. According to him, a closed bedchamber in the silence of night would be suitable for this and *lucubratio* was the best kind of privacy.<sup>193</sup> Several other Romans are also known for burning the midnight oil.<sup>194</sup> As Ambühl points out, the sleepless night spent in working by lamplight became an almost a necessary element of writing process of Latin poetry.<sup>195</sup> Scribes or other servants might have assisted in the writing process, even though authors are also known to do their own writing, withdrawn alone in the closed chamber.<sup>196</sup> K. Dowden calls lucubration "high-status sleep deprivation" and J. Ker emphasizes the displays of frugality in the depictions of nocturnal labor by the light of a humble lamp.<sup>197</sup> In my opinion, this very special Roman cultural phenomenon attests to temporal privacy. As the texts -especially the Quintilian's instructions which refer to the silence, seclusion and privacy provided by practicing *lucubratio*- convey, the night could be considered one's own, free of social duties.

Working by lamplight was not reserved only for virtuous Roman men. Women, primarily the ideal Roman matrons could display their worthiness too by continuing their work after nightfall and engaging in such female activities as spinning.<sup>198</sup> In contrast, *lucubratio* could also be used in a pejorative sense, meaning evening entertainment for old ladies.<sup>199</sup> A moderate need of sleep was also among the desirable qualifications for women of more modest status, for example, the female overseers of farms.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, the enemies of Rome could even be described as virtuous in respect to their austere sleeping habits (Liv. 21,4).

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<sup>193</sup> Quint. *inst.* 10,3,26-8: *Ideoque lucubrantes silentium noctis et clusum cubiculum et lumen unum velut erectos maxime teneat ... Est tamen lucubratio, quotiens ad eam integri ac refecti venimus, optimum secreti genus ... silentium et secessus et undique liber animus ut sunt maxime optanda.*

<sup>194</sup> E.g., Cic. *div.* 2,142; Cic. *parad.* 5; Cic. *Brut.* 312; Varro *ling.* 5,1; Suet. *Aug.* 78; Suet. *Tib.* 19; Suet. *Cal.* 53; Aur. Fronto p. 62 v.d.H; Amm. 25,4,4-6; Aug. *ord.* 1,8; Hier. *c. Vigil.* 17; cf. Lact. *inst.* 3,26,10.

<sup>195</sup> Ambühl 2010, 259-84.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. references to writing process in bedrooms with and without secretary in Plinius: Plin. *epist.* 3,1,7 (*se cubiculo ac stilo reddit*) and *epist.* 9,36 (*notarium voco et ... dicto*).

<sup>197</sup> Dowden 2003, 141, 150-4; Ker 2004, 209-42.

<sup>198</sup> Liv. 1,57; Verg. *Aen.* 8,407; Tib. 1,3,84-9.

<sup>199</sup> Cic. *nat. deor.* 1,94,6.

<sup>200</sup> Colum. 12,1,1-3; cf. Cato *agr.* 5 for the similar qualifications of *vilicus*.

However, not everybody in the Roman world considered this kind of labor virtuous. In the eyes of Martial, the diligent people working by the light of lamp seemed miserable (Mart. 8,3). An irregular rhythm of life was not always regarded as salutary; lack of sleep was considered counterproductive,<sup>201</sup> and instructions were given on how to correctly practice lucubration.<sup>202</sup>

Outside elite circles and the Roman *domus* and apart from performing the military or guarding duties, a sleepless night could have been spent in a variety of activities, some of which were not suitable for daylight.<sup>203</sup> Even though there were restrictions on nocturnal meetings,<sup>204</sup> curfew does not seem to be known in Roman context. The evidence of *Lex Iulia Municipalis* (64) on cart driving restrictions suggests that certain groups were up and about on their legitimate business during the night. It is reasonable to assume that, for instance, farmers bringing their merchandise into the city as well as bakers and other people with similar occupations used the wee hours of the morning for working.<sup>205</sup>

## How Romans slept: sleep-related problems, views and the meaning of sleep

### *Sleep-related problems*

Even though the narrative of the Roman night is largely concentrated on the discomfort of darkness,<sup>206</sup> the positive aspects of resting peacefully were by no means disregarded. Reviving one's strength was considered important and fatigue was understood to be detrimental and sleep-related problems were actively remedied. Sleep relaxed tired minds and bodies,<sup>207</sup> night was ruled by

<sup>201</sup> Sen. *contr. praef.* 16-7; Quint. *inst.* 10,3,27.

<sup>202</sup> Cels.1,2,4-5.

<sup>203</sup> E.g., gaming: Iuv. 8,9-12; story-telling: Lucan. 4,196-202; feasting: Iuv. 14,45-46; Rut. *Lup.* 2,7; Iuv. 15,41-6; arranging rendezvous for lovers and other clandestine meetings as well as in illicit actions: Petron. 85-7; Iuv. 3,10-20; Ov. *am.* 2,19; Plaut. *Trin.* 861-5; Ov. *met.* 10,368-430.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Lex XII tab. 8, 26 and CIL I<sup>2</sup>,581: *Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus*.

<sup>205</sup> See also Mart. 12,57: *nocte pistores*.

<sup>206</sup> See section "Views on sleep" below.

<sup>207</sup> E.g., Liv. 3,2,10; Tert. *anim.* 43; Ov. *met.* 10,368; Sil. 7,280-90; Lucr. 4,453; Verg. *Aen.* 6,515-30, 8,26 and 9,224-5; Cic. *div.* 1,44; Catull. 63,35-40. Nature-themed metaphors expressing the need

sleep and silence,<sup>208</sup> yet vivid dreams could be a source of inspiration.<sup>209</sup> Even such writers as Cicero and Seneca, who otherwise tended to emphasize how little they needed sleep, had to admit that sleeping was necessary for restoring one's energy.<sup>210</sup>

On the other hand, sleeplessness troubled Romans; sleep deprivation as well as nightmares and restless dreams are recurring themes in texts<sup>211</sup> and various cures were introduced. Explanations for the reasons behind the disorder are also offered. The negative effects of sleeping disorders were well understood and sleeplessness was considered harmful and even used as a means of torture.<sup>212</sup>

Life style choices such as drinking and overeating were considered reasons for both lack of sleep and bad dreams.<sup>213</sup> People stayed awake due to uneasiness of mind<sup>214</sup> and insomnia was linked with insanity<sup>215</sup> and lovesickness.<sup>216</sup> Night brought out the worries and according to the principles of the Stoics, one could sleep only with settled, honest mind.<sup>217</sup>

According to Juvenal (3,232-41), the impoverished people of Rome suffered seriously from insomnia, and he was not incorrect in his reasoning, since the lack of sleep has been connected with a negative impact on health.<sup>218</sup> Sleep deprivation cut across class distinctions, but entered even the beds of

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for rest: *Ov. ars* 2,351; *Verg. georg.* 4,184-90.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. figuratively in *Sil.* 10,337-57.

<sup>209</sup> *Aur. Fronto* p. 7 v.d.H.

<sup>210</sup> *Cic. fin.* 5,54, *Cic. Att.* 9,7,7; *Sen. epist.* 56.

<sup>211</sup> *Insomnium* referring to restless dreams: *Sil.* 10,358 and 11,102; *Verg. Aen.* 6,893-9; cf. also *Sen. contr.* 7,7,15. For nightmares see below, n. 243.

<sup>212</sup> E.g., *Liv.* 22,2,7-9; see also *Mart.* 9,68; *Plaut. Merc.* 370-5 (sleeplessness among other hardships); *Stat. Theb.* 3,324-32. Sleep deprivation as torture: *Gell.* 7,4; *Val. Max.* 9,2.ext. 1; cf. Williams 2005, 133-6.

<sup>213</sup> E.g., *Cic. Cato* 44; *Cic. div.* 1,60-5; cf. *Pers.* 3,52-62; *Plaut. Merc.* 225.

<sup>214</sup> *Hist. Aug. Did.* 3,10; *Iuv.* 13,215-20; *Liv.* 40,56; *Lucan.* 2,234-45; *Ov. trist.* 3,8,25-8; *Sen. contr.* 7,8; *Val. Fl.* 2, 135-46; *Catull.* 50; *Cic. S. Rosc.* 65 (implies that one cannot sleep with guilty conscience).

<sup>215</sup> *Caec. com.* 166; *Cels.* 2,7,23-6.

<sup>216</sup> *Hor. carm.* 3,7; *Prop.* 1,5 and 2,17; *Ter. Eun.* 216-22; *Tibul.* 1,2,75-8.

<sup>217</sup> *Sen. epist.* 56,6-7.

<sup>218</sup> This has been attested in numerous studies, see, e.g., Alhola – Polo-Kantola 2007, 553-67.

the wealthy.<sup>219</sup> Well-to-do Romans could, however, flee from the noisiest city streets, either to a suburban villa, the countryside or further away to the provinces.<sup>220</sup>

Sleeplessness was treated in many different ways, starting from Cato's (*agr.* 157) suggestion of eating cabbage (*brassica*) to more effective herbalism, mainly usage of poppies,<sup>221</sup> as well as other plants.<sup>222</sup> The sleep inducing qualities of the opium poppy (*papaver somniferum*) were already known long before the Romans.<sup>223</sup> Understanding the importance of sleep to one's health also becomes clear in medical writings, for example, in Celsus, who introduces several, elaborate treatments and states that wakefulness itself causes illnesses.<sup>224</sup>

*Sopor* was a word also used for deep sleep,<sup>225</sup> while *edormio* was a word meaning to sleep off intoxication.<sup>226</sup> Deep sleep could be a product of traveling<sup>227</sup> or worries.<sup>228</sup> Persons sound asleep snore, some even disturbingly loudly.<sup>229</sup> Snoring (*stertere*) was used as metonym for sleeping<sup>230</sup> or as a sign of looking the other way and feigning sleep.<sup>231</sup> Snoring had a stigma, and it was often connected to deep sleep induced by weariness, heavy labor, hardship or

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<sup>219</sup> E.g. Mart. 9,92.

<sup>220</sup> Mart. 1,49, 4,64 and 12,18.

<sup>221</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 4,486; Sil. 10,337-57 (cf. Sil. 10,350-9); Macr. *Sat.* 7,6.

<sup>222</sup> Other sleep inducing remedies (*somnifica*) and sleeping draughts (*sopor*) were, e.g., anise (Plin. *nat.* 20,186), cinnamon (Plin. *nat.* 23,93) saffron and mandrake, etc. (Cels. 3,18) as well as wine (Gell. 9,12; Mart. Cap. 1,81-2).

<sup>223</sup> E.g., Askitopoulou – Ramoutsaki – Ioanna – Konsolaki 2002, 23-9.

<sup>224</sup> See, e.g., Cels. prooemium, 52; Cels. 2,1,17 and 3,4.

<sup>225</sup> E.g., Liv. 1,7,5; Sen. *epist.* 53,7-8.

<sup>226</sup> *TLL*, vol. V 2, p. 112, lin. 16 - p. 112, lin. 29.

<sup>227</sup> Cic. *rep.* 6,10.

<sup>228</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 6,515-30.

<sup>229</sup> Cic. *Att.* 4,3,5.

<sup>230</sup> Aur. Fronto 63,7 v.d.H; Cic. *div.* 2, 129.

<sup>231</sup> Ov. *am.* 2,2,24; Petron. 85.



drinking,<sup>232</sup> as well as to certain grave illnesses.<sup>233</sup> Snoring, alongside yawning, could even indicate a slack lifestyle.<sup>234</sup>

Snoring could be used to pretend to sleep and covering one's head was a cue for wanting to be in peace and withdraw from the world.<sup>235</sup> One of the sociological discoveries is that sleeping is used as an excuse to avoid the demands of social life.<sup>236</sup> Romans also used sleep as a means of refraining from unwanted social interaction, such as receiving guests, or in order to turn blind eye to disgraceful behavior.<sup>237</sup>

Sleepers were pestered also by such nuisances as lice, bedbugs, scorpions and other such vermin, with which Roman bedrooms were infested,<sup>238</sup> and insects that shun the light (*blattae lucifugae*) were connected to the dark bedrooms.<sup>239</sup> The bug-infested beds were connected with poverty and stinginess; the poor could not even afford a bug-ridden bed.<sup>240</sup> Certain measures against the vermin for example herbal pesticides such as fleawort and cucumber were recommended and used in bedchambers.<sup>241</sup> As maintained by I. Montijn, in some later cultures, good housekeeping is often connected with high moral standards and such signs as fleabites could reveal slackness in housekeeping and thus slackness in morals.<sup>242</sup> In comparison, this moralistic view is not evident in ancient Roman texts, possibly because the subject of housekeeping is too mundane for the elite writers to discuss.

<sup>232</sup> Plaut. *Asin.* 872; Hor. *epist.* 2,2,26-31; Pers. 3,1-5; Apul. *apol.* 59,3; Apul. *met.* 1,11; Quint. *inst.* 4,2,123-4. Snoring as unwelcome trait in a person: Petron. 68. Cf. Williams 2005, 93.

<sup>233</sup> Cels. 2,8,25.

<sup>234</sup> Pers. 3,3,56-60; cf. meanings of yawning (*oscito*) other than just tiredness, e.g., mental drowsiness (Cic. *Cluent.* 71, Cic. *orat.* 2,144), or the sign of an unskilled orator (Cic. *Brut.* 200).

<sup>235</sup> Petron. 85; Hist. Aug. *Aur.* 28.

<sup>236</sup> E.g., Schwartz 1970, 489-90 and Taylor 1993, 470.

<sup>237</sup> Mart. 9,6(7); Cic. *fam.* 7,24; cf. Plut. *Amat.* 16; Plaut. *Mil.* 251.

<sup>238</sup> Sightings of bugs were already recorded in the early instances of Latin literature, namely in Liv. Andr. *com.* 1: *Pulices ne an cimices an pedes*. See also Mart. 11,56,3; scorpions in bed: Aur. Fronto p.73 v.d.H.

<sup>239</sup> Verg. *georg.* 4,240-46; Aug. *c. Faust.* 19,24,525; cf. Aug. *mor. eccl.* 63; Aug. *in epist. Ioh.* 1,15; Isid. *orig.* 12,8,6.

<sup>240</sup> Hor. *sat.* 2,3,115-20; Mart. 11,32.

<sup>241</sup> Varro *rust.* 1,2,25-6; Plin. *nat.* 20,155, 20,171-2 and 22,49.

<sup>242</sup> Montijn 2008, 75-92.

Not only physiological sleep disorders and real-life nuisances such as vermin disturbed the Romans, but supernatural powers tormented them as well. Omens were commonly seen in dreams and phantoms haunted vulnerable sleepers.<sup>243</sup> As W. Harris explains in his detailed study on dreaming in Classical Antiquity, finding out whether Romans believed in dreams is not a straightforward question to solve; the attitude towards dreams was not consistent and universal, and the circumstances of dreaming played a role in whether one was inclined to believe in them.<sup>244</sup> Spaeth discusses nocturnal terrors, including the *incubus*, which refers to a nightly apparition of an evil creature who forces himself upon sleeping women.<sup>245</sup> This specific type of nightmare already appears in ancient texts, though the physiological reasons behind this parasomnic episode (i.e., sleep paralysis) have been understood only very recently.<sup>246</sup> Another example of how physiology influences cultural phenomena is introduced by Galassi and Ashrafian who attribute Caesar's bad dreams to cardiovascular disease and repeated cerebrovascular events.<sup>247</sup>

What I would like to add to the scholarship of Roman nightly visions is the notion of the meaning of the visitations of ghosts, which Harrison classifies among anxiety dreams.<sup>248</sup> In my view, these stories could be used (apart from being just dramatic entertainment), to deal with certain difficult issues, such as a bad conscience; victims haunted their killers in their dreams and murder victims' spirits sought justice.<sup>249</sup> Sometimes the apparitions were loved ones and

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<sup>243</sup> Ancient sources on night visions and premonition dreams, e.g., Cic. *div.* 1,45-57, 121; Cic. *nat. deor.* 2,166; cf. Liv. 1,39; Suet. *Claud.* 37; Apul. *apol.* 63,9-64,1; Apul. *met.* 6,30; cf. Priap. 32,1; Plaut. *Merc.* 225; Plin. *epist.* 1,18; Aug. *civ.* 18,18. On the idea of souls deserting the body during sleep: Tert. *anim.* 44. Cicero's skeptical attitude towards ominous dreams and dreams as day residue which stem from our own waking experiences: Cic. *div.* 2,139-40; cf. Cic. *div.* 1,58, 1,71, 2,119-26, 2,147-8, 2,88 and 2,10; dreams in decision-making: Liv. 8,6. In addition, very common in biographical *opera* such as Suetonius to *Historia Augusta* (e.g., Suet. *Iul.* 7 and 81; Suet. *Aug.* 91, 94; Hist. Aug. *Hadr.* 25; Hist. Aug. *Hadr.* 26,6-10 etc.). Fortune tellers expiating dreams: Cic. *div.* 2,129, cf. Cic. *div.* 1,45; Mart. 7,54, cf. Mart. 11,49.

<sup>244</sup> Harris 2009, 125-6, 132.

<sup>245</sup> Spaeth 2010, 238.

<sup>246</sup> Aug. *civ.* 15,23; Tert. *anim.* 44; apparitions of a sexual nature in Cels. 4,28.

<sup>247</sup> Galassi – Ashrafian 2015, 1521-2.

<sup>248</sup> Harrison 2013, 156.

<sup>249</sup> Amm. 14,11,17; Plaut. *Most.* 484-95; Plin. *epist.* 24,17,81; Val. Max. 1,7,7.

relatives, which could be considered soothing sights and a psychological coping mechanism for the bereaved.<sup>250</sup>

## Views on sleep

Sleeping is not and has never been only a physiological phenomenon. The views on sleeping in different cultures rely on and reveal the mindset of the surrounding society. Metaphors for sleep and sleeping and night in proverbs can also reveal interesting cultural conceptions. As Ken Dowden already pointed out, wakefulness was considered virtuous in Roman thinking.<sup>251</sup> When reading the passages on Roman night, one cannot avoid running into the negative and moralistic attitudes Romans had towards sleep and night more generally; the testimonies are abundant.

As stated before, Romans perceived sleeping and drowsiness in many instances as negative, even related to death.<sup>252</sup> Drunken sleep mostly is described in unflattering tones.<sup>253</sup> And even if staying up was regarded a good thing, one had to be vigilant in order to receive glory; wasting the night was disdained.<sup>254</sup> Cicero is especially vocal on the moral inferiority of "others," which is expressed in their debauched habits of drinking and sleeping.<sup>255</sup> In his rhetorical compositions, juxtapositions are common, and for him, sleeping is to a vigil and inebriation to sobriety is the same as stupidity to intelligence.<sup>256</sup> Interestingly enough, he also sees these topics – wine-drinking and sleeping alongside insanity – in a slightly more positive light, as sources of subconscious realizations (Cic. *top.* 75).

Not only was drunken sleep scorned, but sleeping was on a more general level connected to such deplorable things as drowsiness, laziness and ignorance,

<sup>250</sup> Prop. 4,7; Ps. Quint. *decl.* 10.

<sup>251</sup> Dowden 2003, 149-50.

<sup>252</sup> Verg. *Aen.* 6,278 (*consanguineus Leti Sopor*); cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6,390-91 and 6,520-5.

<sup>253</sup> E.g., in Liv. 9,30, 25,24 and 29,34.

<sup>254</sup> Iuv. 8,9-12.

<sup>255</sup> E.g., in Cic. *p. red. in sen.* 13,7,30; Cic. *har. resp.* 55,114; Cic. *Verr. II* 5,94.

<sup>256</sup> Cic. *Catil.* 2,10.

with Cicero again as the beacon of the moralists.<sup>257</sup> In addition, a sleeping audience was a sign of bad rhetorical skills or of badly written verse.<sup>258</sup>

Since sleeping had negative connotations, sleeplessness and managing with little sleep was considered a virtue.<sup>259</sup> When a crisis arises, one should not sleep.<sup>260</sup> Alertness was required particularly in a military context<sup>261</sup> and it was also a virtue worth mentioning in the biographies of great men. Descriptions of sleeping habits could, however, be used to underline one's shortcomings.<sup>262</sup> There was, however, room for debate on the meaning and importance of wakefulness and sleep in antiquity, as becomes evident in the correspondence between Marcus Aurelius and Fronto, where the former speaks for wakefulness and the latter defends sleep.<sup>263</sup>

### Concluding remarks: factors behind Roman sleeping arrangements

In this study, I have aimed at clarifying the main historical aspects of Roman sleeping culture, *how, when, where and with whom* Romans slept and to find out the factors behind these arrangements. The social status of the inhabitants in an elite *domus* was one of these factors. The heads of households seem to have had the final say in the arrangements for the whole *familia*. Children and slaves were definitely taken into consideration in arranging domestic space. It seems, however, that slaves had little power over their sleeping arrangements, even though

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<sup>257</sup> E.g. Cic. *Catil.* 3,16 (condemning lethargy); Cic. *sen.* 36 (vices of sluggish old age); Cic. *fin.* 5,55 (constant repose unnatural). Among other writers, e.g., Hor. *ars* 359 (nodding Homer); Pers. 5,132-35 (lazy snoring); Ter. *Eun.* 1075-80 (sluggishness); Plin. *epist.* 1,2 (Pliny calls himself lazy, but whether he means it or just tries to appear modest, see, e.g., Hoffer 1999, 79).

<sup>258</sup> Cic. *Brut.* 278; Hor. *ars* 105; cf. Suet. *Vesp.* 4,4.

<sup>259</sup> Dio Cass. 73,5; Sil. 15,101-12; Vell. 2,41 and 2,88,2. Boasting of frugal sleeping habits: Sen. *epist.* 83,6; Plin. *epist.* 3,5,7-9.

<sup>260</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 3,34.

<sup>261</sup> Amm. 31,7,8-9. Watchful guards appear in historical as well as mythological texts (e.g., Amm. 18,2,10 and 31,7,9; Ov. *met.* 9,190; Lucan. 4,552); cf. Liv. 23,18.

<sup>262</sup> E.g., Suet. *Calig.* 50-1; Suet. *Claud.* 33; Hist. Aug. *Ver.* 4; Hist. Aug. *Heliog.* 28,5-6; cf. Hist. Aug. *Aur.* 10,6-9.

<sup>263</sup> Aur. *Fronto* p. 5,22 v.d.H and p.8,9-p.9,15 v.d.H.

Roman literature also brings up the topos of insouciant slaves, who sleep well no matter what troubles are bothering the master.

The evidence testifies to how an urban lifestyle, which determined and reciprocally was shaped by the needs and demands of the city dwellers, contributed to sleeping arrangements: in the town houses (*domus*) sleeping areas were clearly defined, linguistically differentiated and the degree of control over closed bedrooms was high. Unlike some approaches to sleeping in recent scholarship have suggested, a desire to be left alone in peace and quiet, withdrawing from the social demands (even by feigning of sleep) and other signs of wanting privacy are traits that can be found in connection with upper class Roman sleeping arrangements. The bedroom was also was the place for informal dress and the antithesis of the busy life in the *fora*. It was also the locus of withdrawal, where there was limited access without an invitation, and admittance was usually based on familiarity (although sometimes forceful entries to bedrooms took place). Receiving guests in the bedchamber was often connected with the illness of the host, revealing how in a society where medicine is underdeveloped and illnesses are commonplace, there is need to reconcile bodily impediments with the demands of social duties.

The paraphernalia of sleeping was diverse; the Roman bed was a multi-functional piece of furniture and bedding was elaborate. Mere mats for sleeping seem to have been less popular, even though they may have been used by slaves.

If and when the bed(room) was shared, the chosen bedfellow was usually the spouse or lover, yet in some cases other adult family members could share a bedroom. Communal sleeping as such was not practiced in the *domus*, but a certain flexibility in sleeping arrangements comes up in special contexts, such as traveling and especially in the military, where unrelated adults shared the sleeping area. Ritualistic traditions could have an impact on sleeping: certain rites needed purity and abstinence and thus required couples to sleep apart. In addition there is some evidence for nocturnal religious services where the attendees might have slept in temples.

Moralistic concerns shaped Roman sleeping as well. Sleeping was, in many ways, viewed in a negative light and the night-time space use and sleeping arrangements -or at least their representations in literature- were colored by moralistic judgments. As has already established in previous research, in Roman thinking, sleeping had many negative connotations and it was seen as a sign of indolence and dullness. Respectively, managing with little sleep and getting up

early were considered merits reserved for the ambitious noblemen. To a modern observer, the double standards are evident since the masters were actually woken up by their slaves. A similar way of thinking is discernible elsewhere in texts, for example sleeping outside and on the ground was considered either uncouth or virtuous, depending on the context: it was admirable if it testified to the worthiness of Roman ancestors or mythical superheroes but deplorable if done by savages and other outsiders to the Roman world.

The perils of the Roman night were diverse and fear of the dark influenced the nocturnal space use as well; the special character of night was even recognized in the (archaic) Roman law. Dangers of the Roman night also came from the unreal world, phantoms menaced vulnerable victims and (bad) omens were relayed in dreams. Ghost stories were used -apart from just entertainment purposes- as a means of dealing with certain sensitive issues, such as a bad conscience.

Despite the negative attitudes, the importance of restoring one's strength with sound sleep was well understood. Unsolicited sleeplessness troubled Romans and elaborate cures were offered and sleep-related problems were actively remedied. City life was considered too busy and noisy by many, and the lack of sleep in the capital was understood as causing even health problems, which could be eased by moving away to the countryside.

Certain of the findings of modern sociological sleep research are also detectable in the Roman material, revealing how many elements of sleeping cultures can be considered universal. Among these are the stigma of snoring, using sleep as a means of avoiding social interaction and using sleep deprivation as a means of torture. Soothing rituals, which assist in dealing with the dangers associated with unconsciousness and the vulnerability of a sleeper, can be observed in the Roman sleeping habits. One's customary bed was considered the safest and even preferred sides of beds were established, attesting to the permanence in Roman sleeping arrangements.

The Roman sleeping rhythm was biphasic, including segments of sleep both at mid-day ("siesta") and at night. Sleep could be postponed until late in the night, especially among elite writers, by indulging in literary activities (*lucubratio*). However, the phenomenon of so-called segmented sleep, introduced by Ekirch, was not as eminent form of slumber in Roman antiquity as it appears to have been in later periods in European history. Resisting sleep by toiling in the night was grounds for praise, even for women and enemies of Rome.

Lucubration can be seen as evidence of temporal privacy. However, Roman sleeping habits also reveal how climate dictated sleeping arrangements as well. A resting period in the hottest hour of the day and working in the cool night as well as changing sleeping areas according to the seasons were practices in Roman Italy. On the other hand, the damp Italian winters require real beds with legs and this might explain why references to using only mats for sleeping are relatively rare in Roman literature. The Biblical references to using pallets for sleeping tell a story of warmer a climate and there have clearly been differences in the sleeping habits in the different parts of Roman Empire. This, however, is a matter for further studies.

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