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Generals' Dreams before Battle: An Overview of a Recurring Motif in Ancient Historiography (4th c. BC - 3rd c. AD)

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GENERALS' DREAMS BEFORE BATTLE: AN OVERVIEW OF A RECURRING MOTIF IN ANCIENT HISTORIOGRAPHY (4th C. BC – 3rd C. AD)

Jamie Vesterinen*

There are dozens of references in the ancient historiographers and biographers to dreams experienced and/or reported, during military operations. The references include brief mentions as well as descriptions of various lengths of these dreams and their consequences. Many of the recorded dreams are said to have occurred during preparations for expeditions,[1] during sieges,[2] or shortly before battle. In this paper, I will limit the overview to a specific type of situation that recurs in the accounts of ancient historians and biographers: dreams of generals that occurred very shortly before battles. I will look at twenty such occasions, from the earliest examples set in Greco-Roman contexts in the fifth century BC to the first century AD, and argue that there is a fairly formalized narrative structure that the historians of the Classical, Hellenistic, and early Imperial eras employed to describe this type of dreaming and dream-sharing event. I will also argue that while the motif was probably based on an actual practice of interpreting dreams during times of war, it could also be used for various literary purposes, and that one of its most important functions was to demonstrate the working of divine intervention in military conflicts.

* I thank Dr Kirsi Kanerva and the two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments and suggestions.

[1] E.g. Hdt. 7,12–18; 47; 7,19 (Xerxes I's invasion of Greece in 480–479 BC); Plut. *Ages.* 6; *Pel.* 21 (Agesilaus II's expedition against Persia in 396–394 BC); Diod. Sic. 16,66; Plut. *Tim.* 8 (Timoleon's voyage to Sicily in 345 BC).

[2] E.g. Plut. *Lys.* 20 (siege of Aphytis, ca. 404 BC); Arr. *Anab.* 2,18; Diod. Sic. 17,41; Plut. *Alex.* 24; Curt. 4,2–3 (siege of Tyre in 332 BC); App. *Mith.* 106–107 (siege of Patara in 88/87 BC); Plut. *Luc.* 10 (siege of Cyzicus in 73 BC).

Introduction

In the ancient world, the gods were routinely consulted on political and military matters.[3] Apart from the consultation of oracles before campaigns, dreams and omens were also interpreted while on campaign, for which purpose professional seers accompanied the armies and were consulted by the commanders.[4] Although much research has been done on dreams, epiphanies, and oracles in the ancient world, to my knowledge there is no comprehensive, systematic study on the role of dream interpretation and dream-sharing in ancient military contexts, despite the fact that this phenomenon is attested in multiple historical sources. I propose to augment our understanding of only a small portion of this material, by focusing on a specific type of typical situation or dream report that recurs in the ancient Greek and Roman historiographers: the general's dream shortly before battle.[5]

The earliest historian to employ this motif in the Greco-Roman context is Xenophon, who records his own dreams during the expedition of Cyrus, although Herodotus already recorded two pre-battle dreams set in Egyptian and Persian contexts.[6] Since a sufficient discussion on the Herodotean passages and

[3] McCallum 2017, 36; Anderson 2022.

[4] McCallum 2017, 342–343; see esp. n. 74 for further bibliography on the *manteis* and *chresmologoi*, to which may be added Renberg 2015. For military *mantike*, see Pritchett 1979, 47–90; Flower 2008, 153–187.

[5] For dreams in the context of ancient warfare, see Loretto 1957, 143–169; Pritchett 1979; for epiphanies during battles and sieges, Petridou 2015, 107–141. On the dreams of military men in Hellenistic times, see Weber 1999; for the Imperial era, *id.* 2000, 245–311. Various articles discuss specific dreams in military contexts, e.g., Pelling 1997; Kragelund 2001; Harris 2005; Fenechiu 2011, to mention only a few. Not only generals had important dreams: see e.g. Hdt. 6,107 (Hippias' dream before the Battle of Marathon); Plut. *Ant.* 22; *Brut.* 41; Suet. *Aug.* 91; Val. Max. 1,7,1–2; App. *B Civ.* 4,14,110; Cass. Dio 47,41; 47,46 (Augustus barely escaping his tent during the Battle of Philippi thanks to a dream of his physician).

[6] The dream of the Egyptian priest and ruler Sethos during Sennacherib's invasion predicted his victory at Pelusium (ca. 700 BC) (Hdt. 2,141). Although Cyrus the Great's dream during his war with the Massagetae (1,209–210) occurred shortly before a battle, Herodotus associates it with his death (ca. 530 BC) in a subsequent battle (1,214) and Darius' ascension to the throne, which occurred much later (Xen. *Cyr.* 8,7,1–5 gives a different account of Cyrus' death). In mythology, dreams forbade Latinus and Aeneas to engage in battle with each other (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1,57,2–4; Cass. Dio 1, fr. Zonar. 7,1). It is unclear whether Marius' dream ([Plut.] *Par. min.* 310 D; cf n. 50) preceded a battle.

their sources would distract too much from the focus on Greco-Roman military culture, I will omit them. While the earliest instances set in the Greco-Roman context are dated to the fifth century BC, due to limited space the last historian discussed here is Cassius Dio. This is a convenient end point, as the last recorded pre-battle dreams of generals are set in the beginning of the first century AD, after which there is a long interval until the motif resurfaces.[7]

The nights immediately before battle would undoubtedly tend to be stressful, and getting enough sleep in such times might be not only difficult due to the excitement but also dangerous, in case the enemy decided to attempt a surprise attack or an ambush by night.[8] On the other hand, as we shall see, sleep was a favourable state for receiving divine last-minute instructions that might decide the course of the upcoming battle. As motivation was key to success, it would have been of primary importance to keep the army motivated during stressful times, and favourable dreams would have been welcomed; on the other hand, dreams that invoked uncertainty would have been a great annoyance, and potentially corruptive of battle morale.[9]

There can be little doubt that the importance of dream-interpretation in accounts of military campaigns is based on historical reality.[10] The conventional structure of the dream reports, nevertheless, raises the question of to what extent they have been influenced by earlier literary descriptions of similar dreaming and dream-sharing events in the historiography of warfare, and to what extent they reflect an actual practice of sharing and interpreting dreams in ancient military culture. After an overview of the evidence, I shall briefly try to address this question. Finally, I will discuss divine intervention as a theme to which the battle-dream motif seems to be essentially linked.

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[7] Perhaps not until Constantine's dream before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD 312 (Lactant. *De mort. pers.* 44; Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1,29–30).

[8] For night time assaults and νυκτομαχίαι, see e.g. Hom. *Il.* 10,469–514; [Eur.] *Rhes.* 595–803; Hdt. 1,74; Thuc. 7,44; Paus. 4,19,2; Plut. *Nic.* 21; Polyb. 5,52; Paus. 10,18,4; Paus. 10,23,7–9; nos. 10 and 17 below; and Sheldon 2012.

[9] On the importance of motivation and morale for military success, see, e.g., McCallum 2017, 31–34.

[10] See Pritchett 1979, 3; McCallum 2017, 3.

An overview of the evidence

The dream reports discussed in this paper are listed below in chronological order (for the excerpts, see the Appendix).

1. While the Greeks were preparing for the Battle of Plataea (479 BC), the Athenian general Aristides was advised by the Delphic oracle to confront the Persian army on the Athenians' own soil, in the plain of Eleusinian Demeter and Kore. Believing that the oracle referred to Eleusis, the generals intended to lead their troops back to Attica; before they moved, Zeus Soter instructed the Plataean general Arimnestus in a dream to search for the plain near Plataea. Arimnestus referred the dream to the most experienced citizens, and when they discovered a plain that was a suitable battleground and in accordance with the prophecy, they chose to remain in Plataea. As a precaution, they gifted the region to Athens (Plut. *Arist.* 11).

2. Shortly before the Battle of Arginusae (406 BC), omens and a dream of the Athenian general Thrasyllus[11] were interpreted by the seers who accompanied the army to indicate that, although Athens would be victorious, it would lose seven generals (as in the legendary battle of the Seven against Thebes). The generals ordered the news of the prophesied victory to be shared with the troops, but forbade reporting the expected losses (Diod. Sic. 13,97).

3. When Xenophon was leading the Greek mercenaries hired by Cyrus the Younger back to Greece (401–400/399 BC), they were prevented from crossing the Centrites river by an army guarding the opposite shore. While they were greatly perplexed, Xenophon had a dream that he and his colleague considered encouraging. Not long afterwards, a shallow crossing was discovered, which allowed the Greeks to pass safely to the other side and engage in battle (Xen. *An.* 4,3).

4. Shortly before the Battle of Leuctra (371 BC), when the Thebans were encamped at Leuctra, their commander Pelopidas dreamed that he was bidden to sacrifice a girl to the local heroines Leuctrides to guarantee victory. When he told the dream to the generals and seers, they could not come to an agreement

[11] Called Thrasybulus, but apparently Thrasyllus (Kagan 1987, 342).

on what should be done, until a horse that appeared to suit the prophecy was noticed and sacrificed instead of a human victim (Plut. *Pel.* 20–22).[12]

5. Before the Battle of Vesuvius (340 BC) during the Latin Wars, the consuls P. Decius Mus and T. Manlius Torquatus both dreamed of being told that the side whose general would devote himself and the enemy army to the gods (*devotio*) would gain victory. In the morning, they discussed the dream with each other and (according to Livy and Dio) in front of a council and decided that one of them would devote himself during the battle, which Mus eventually did (Livy 8,6; Val. Max. 1,7,3; Cass. Dio 7, fr. Zonar. 7,26). The author of the Pseudo-Plutarchean *Parallela minora* only records Mus' dream ([Plut.] *Par. min.* 310 A–B).[13]

6. After Eumenes of Cardia had been made satrap of Cappadocia, Asia was invaded by competing Diadochi. While the armies were preparing to confront each other in the Battle of Hellespont (321/320 BC), he had a dream that predicted his military success (Plut. *Eum.* 6).

7. When Antigonus I Monophthalmus and his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes were preparing for the Battle of Ipsus (301 BC), their defeat was anticipated by unfavourable omens, including a dream of Demetrius (Plut. *Demetr.* 29).

8. After Demetrius had been proclaimed king of Macedonia and was pressed by his enemies, Pyrrhus of Epirus saw a favourable occasion to invade lower Macedonia. At this time, he had an assuring dream. Encouraged by it, he marched against Beroea and captured it (288 BC) (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 11).

9. During the Pyrrhic War (280–275 BC), one Valerius Conatus,[14] a priest experienced in divination (μαντικῆς ἔμπειρος), had a dream that inspired him

[12] The story is also told in Plut. *Am. narr.* 774 C–D; cf. Paus. 9,13,5–6. Prior to the battle, the Thebans had consulted several oracles (Paus. 4,32,5). For the oracular tradition concerning the battle, see McCallum 2017, 181–183; 268–269.

[13] The dream is also referred to in Cass. Dio 8, fr. Zonar. 8,1. For the *devotio*, see Livy 8,9. Cicero reports a different version, or perhaps a different dream that Mus supposedly dreamt years before the battle (*Div.* 1,51).

[14] In Nachstädt *et al.* 1971, Οὐαλέριος <Τορ>κουᾶτος.

to dress in his priestly attire. That done, he led his soldiers to battle, killed many, and was swallowed by the earth ([Plut.] *Par. min.* 307 B).

10. On the night of the Battle of Beneventum (275 BC) at the end of the Pyrrhic War, Pyrrhus had a dream that made him wish to delay the assault; his friends would not allow that, and so they advanced and were defeated (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 20,12).

11. During his assault on Sparta in 272 BC, Pyrrhus had a dream that he considered favourable. When he reported it to his colleagues, only Lysimachus disagreed on the interpretation, correctly suspecting that Pyrrhus would fail to conquer the city (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 29).[15]

12. A day before his attack on Carthago Nova (209 BC), Scipio Africanus called a meeting in order to encourage his troops. In the end of his speech, he asserted that their strategy had been suggested to him in a dream by none other than Neptune, who would make his support manifest at a critical moment. During the battle, an ebb occurred that allowed the soldiers to storm the city walls from the lagoon facing it; believing this to be the promised miracle, they were greatly encouraged, oblivious that the ebb was a regular phenomenon about which Scipio had learned from local fishers (Polyb. 10,8; 10,11; 10,14).[16]

13. In the aftermath of the Social War, when Rome had fallen into Marius' hands and Sulla was considering marching on the city in 88 BC, he was encouraged to carry out the plan by a dream that he shared with his colleague. Next morning, he set out for Rome (Plut. *Sull.* 9).

14. On the eve of the Battle of Sacriportus (82 BC), during their Second Civil War, Sulla had a dream that made him eager to confront Marius the following day; it proved victorious (Plut. *Sull.* 28).

[15] This could be considered a "dream during siege" rather than a "dream shortly before battle", but since it occurred on the eve of the decisive battle of the assault, I have decided to include it in the discussion.

[16] For another account of the events, see Livy 26,42–47. Livy mentions the ebb and provides an elaborate version of Scipio's speech; he may have mentioned the dream in the lacuna at its end (26,43,8), but the passage is too fragmentary to be sure (cf. Livy 26,41,18; 26,45,9). For an analysis of discrepancies in the two versions, see Richardson 2018.

15. On the night before the Battle of Lemnos (73/72 BC) during the Third Mithridatic War, Lucullus dreamed that Aphrodite addressed him as a lion and urged him to wake up, because "the fawns were near"; he woke up and reported the dream to his friends. Soon after, they received word of the approach of Mithridates VI Eupator's fleet, which they attacked and defeated (Plut. *Luc.* 12).

16. The night before capturing Sinope (70 BC) during the same war, Lucullus, according to Plutarch, dreamed of a figure who told him that Autolycus was waiting to meet him. He could not interpret the dream, but after the conquest he saw a statue lying on the beach and was told that it represented the local *heros oikistes* Autolycus. According to Appian, he was called by a figure in his sleep, and after taking the city he saw the statue being carried and recognized its appearance from his dream. Because of the dream, he restored to the Sinopeans their city, which had been occupied by Mithridates' supporters (Plut. *Luc.* 23; App. *Mith.* 370–373).[17]

17. In 66 BC, while fleeing from Pompey during the same war, Mithridates had a distressing dream that was interrupted when he was woken up in the middle of the night by his friends, who informed him that Pompey was about to attack his camp (Plut. *Pomp.* 32).

18. In the early hours of the day of the Battle of Pharsalus (48 BC), Pompey had a dream that he shared with his companions; they were certain that it predicted victory and began preparations for celebration before the battle was even fought. Pompey himself was worried by the dream and suspected an unfavourable outcome (Plut. *Caes.* 42; *Pomp.* 68; App. *B Civ.* 2,10,68–69).[18]

19. On the night before a battle at the Pontes Longi in northern Germania (AD 15), the Roman *legatus* Aulus Caecina Severus dreamed a terrible dream; the following day, his army sustained major losses at the hands of the Germanic tribes led by Arminius (Tac. *Ann.* 1,65).

[17] The conquest, like Pyrrhus' assault on Sparta (11), occurred at the end of a siege.

[18] The dream is also reported in Lucan (7,7–44). For an analysis, see Pelling 1997, 204–205, 207.

20. Next year, shortly before gaining a victory over Arminius in the Battle of Idistaviso (AD 16), Germanicus experienced an encouraging dream (Tac. *Ann.* 2,14).

Settings and descriptions of the dreams

The dreams are said to have occurred, or can be presumed to have done so, very shortly before a major battle took place. The dreamers were preparing for a confrontation with their enemies and, in most cases, it had already been established that the battle would be fought on the next day. The time of dreaming, when it is mentioned or can be deduced, was generally during the night (2, 3, 5abd, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16b, 18b, 19, 20), midnight (ἐκ μέσων νυκτῶν, 17), or sometime around the early morning (18c).

The obvious or likeliest location of this dreaming in the accounts is the army camp (στρατόπεδον, 4, 18b; *castra*, 5ab; χάραξ, 17).[19] Sometimes this was situated in or near the location of the battle: Pelopidas' camp was located on or in the vicinity of the plain of Leuctra; Pompey's troops had encamped on the plain of Pharsalus; and Mithridates' army was attacked while encamped. Occasionally, the location had cultic significance: the Thebans had encamped near the tombs of local minor deities, and Lucullus in a sanctuary of Aphrodite in the Troad (15). Some camps were positioned near rivers: Xenophon's near the boundary river Centrites; Mithridates' in the vicinity of the Euphrates (17); and Germanicus' near the Visurgis (modern Weser) (Tac. *Ann.* 2,12; 2,16). Mus and Torquatus' camp, according to one source, was located close to the foot of Mount Vesuvius (5b).[20] Caecina had encamped in a vale near the swampy, forested wilderness of northern Germania (Tac. *Ann.* 1,63–64), where his predecessor Quinctilius Varus had taken his own life after a catastrophic defeat in AD 9, a landscape that infiltrated his dream.[21] Tombs and sanctuaries – probably also rivers and mountains – were perceived by the ancients as liminal locations, where the

[19] Except for no. 9, in which we do not know whether the priest had participated in the warfare before his dream.

[20] Lake Avernus and its legendary entrance to the underworld was also nearby the mountain (Strab. 5,4,5; Verg. *Aen.* 5,731–737).

[21] In the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest; the fallen had been left unburied in the forest and their remains were only recently interred by the Romans (Tac. *Ann.* 1,60–62).

worlds of the living and the dead, of gods and humans, might intersect; such places may have felt particularly apt for oracular dreams.[22]

The descriptions of the dreams are short, comprising one or two sentences,[23] and are introduced by standard opening phrases, usually with the verbs δοκέω / ὁράω / *video*, and/or φαίνομαι or παρίστημι used of the dream figure, and a participial form of (κατα)κοιμάω / καταδαρθάνω[24] or an adverbial phrase meaning "in a dream", "in sleep", or "at night".[25] In most cases, the dream is introduced as a factual occurrence, in direct third-person narrative voice;[26] thrice, the introduction is conditioned by *dicitur* / λέγεται;[27] and twice the dream report is embedded in a citation of the dreamer's speech.[28]

William Harris has proposed a useful classification of ancient dreams into two major types according to their content: epiphanies and episode dreams. An epiphany dream features a character, or a dream figure, approaching and addressing the dreamer, whereas an episode dream includes a more complex set of events that the dreamer may either passively observe or actively participate in. Harris further distinguishes symbolic episode dreams, which contain symbolic

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[22] Since death is a presence never far in warfare, battlefields can be considered liminal places whence mortals pass on to the world of the dead; we may recall the story of the twins Hypnos and Thanatos carrying away Sarpedon's body after his death in the Trojan War (Hom. *Il.* 16,659–683), which became a topic in Athenian funeral art.

[23] Note, though, the *lacuna* in 18a, which interrupts the description of the dream.

[24] κατακοιμηθεὶς (4, 15); καταδαρθὼν (6); κοιμώμενος (11).

[25] κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους (1, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 16a, 18b); κατὰ τὴν νύκτα (2); ὄναρ (3, 5c, 18c); *in quiete* (5a); *nocte* (5b); ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ (5d, 10); τῆς νυκτὸς (8, 18b); κατ᾽ ὄναρ (9); κατὰ τὸν ὕπνον (12); νύκτωρ (15); ἐν ὕπνοις (17).

[26] Direct narration: ἔδοξε (1, 4, 7, 8, 10, 18b); εἶδε (2, 11); εἶδεν (3, 5c, 6); *uiderunt* (5b); ἰδὼν (…) κατεπόθη (9); ἐτύγχανε (…) ἑωρακὼς (14); ἐδόκει (15, 16a). (Note that Xenophon is reporting his own dream.) Once the dream is the subject of δοκέω: ὄναρ ἀμφοῖν (…) ὁμοίως φανὲν ἔδοξε λέγειν (5d). The following introductions are different: τὴν πόλιν (…) ἠφίει δι᾽ ἐνύπνιον (16b); ἀνεκρούετο (…) τὴν γνώμην, ἔτι καὶ φασμάτων (…) προσγενομένων καὶ καθ᾽ ὕπνον ὄψεως (18a); *ducemque terruit dira quies* (19); *nox eadem laetam Germanico quietem tulit* (20).

[27] "It is said": *dicitur visa* (5a); λέγεται (…) φανῆναι (13); λέγεται (…) ἰδεῖν (17).

[28] Reported speech of the dreamer: ἔφη τὴν ἐπιβολὴν (…) ὑποδεδειχέναι τὸν Ποσειδῶνα παραστάντα (12); ἔφασκεν (…) καθιεροῦν (18c). According to Lipka (2022, 151; 156), the Greek historians generally use the direct third person narrative voice (the 'critical mode') when reporting dreams and reported speech (the 'anecdotal mode') when reporting epiphanies experienced while awake, making dream reports seem more "objective" and "real" than reports of waking-life epiphanies.

(or allegorical) elements that need to be interpreted in order to extract the dream's "message", from non-symbolic ones, which include no such elements. As he points out, the distinction between epiphanies and episode dreams is not always clearcut, and a dream may contain elements of both types.[29]

If we apply Harris' classification to the passages discussed here, we can distinguish six dreams (or seven, if the consuls' dreams are counted separately) that probably qualify primarily as epiphanies (1, 5, 7, 12, 15, 16), seven symbolic episode dreams (2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 17, 18), and five dreams that seem to combine elements of both types (4, 8, 13, 19, 20). One dream is probably best categorized as a non-symbolic episode dream (14), and the content of another is not described (9). In the epiphanies, a god or minor deity, a deceased person, or an unidentified figure (*species*, 5ab) approaches the sleeper and either commands or instructs him. The apparitions may demand sacrifice, suggest tactics or a choice of battleground, or exhort the dreamer to battle. Aphrodite expresses herself in a riddling hexameter verse,[30] and the Cappadocian goddess seen by Sulla by placing a thunderbolt in his hand and naming his enemies. Deceased persons encountered in dreams may promise assistance to the dreamer or his enemy; sometimes they appear wailing (4), sick (8), or frightening and covered in blood (19).

The appearance of local divinities is quite "natural" and unsurprising.[31] According to a myth, the Leuctrides had been violated and killed by Spartan men, as a result of which their father Scedasus had cast a curse on Sparta; this

[29] Harris 2009, 23–49; esp. 41; 46–49. He defines the epiphany dream as "the sleeper's experience of a visitation by an individual, often a divine being or a divine messenger but sometimes simply an authoritative person or a ghost, who brings instructions or important information" (p. 24). Cf. Artemidorus' ὄνειροι ἀλληγορικοί ("allegorical dreams") and ὄνειροι θεωρηματικοί ("dreams meant to be interpreted as seen") (1,2). Artemidorus only extends this classification to ὄνειροι, or prophetic dreams, and not to ἐνύπνια, or dreams that originate solely in the dreamer's own psyche or bodily functions.

[30] The hexameter verse oracle given in a dream has parallels in other dream reports: Hdt. 5,55–56; 62 (Hipparchus' dream before his death in 514/513 BC); Plut. *Cim.* 18 (Cimon's dream before his death in 449 BC); Plut. *Alex.* 26 (Alexander's dream associated with the foundation of Alexandria in Egypt in 331 BC); Plut. *Mar.* 45 (Marius' dreams near the end of his life in 86 BC); cf. also Cass. Dio 80,5 (Dio's dream, in which he was ordered to conclude his work with the verses).

[31] Cf. Plut. *Ages.* 6; and see n. 2 in this paper for sources on dreams relating to the siege of Tyre.

story explained their willingness to assist the Thebans.[32] Lucullus received help from Aphrodite while sleeping in her sanctuary, and his decision to liberate Sinope after taking it from the Cilician occupiers was motivated by a dream of Autolycus (as we are told), who had an oracular shrine (μαντεῖον, Strab. 12,3,11) in the city. Sometimes a deity's appearance in a dream was not associated with a particular cult but more loosely with the local topography. Neptune's (alleged) involvement relates to the fact that the attack on Carthago Nova was conducted partly from the sea and to the "miracle" of the ebb, whereas Demeter who appeared to Eumenes recalled to his mind the abundance of grain that was a feature of the landscape of Cappadocia at the time.

The rest of the deities do not appear to have a close association with the locations where the dreaming occurred, but they are associated with warfare. Zeus Soter was invoked in times of danger, and his manifestations sometimes occurred during military conflicts.[33] In the Persian Wars, he seems to have been credited with helping the Greeks.[34] The Cappadocian goddess has been identified as Ma-Bellona,[35] a syncretic aspect of the indigenous Roman goddess of war Bellona and the Cappadocian goddess Ma, whose cult may have been adopted by Roman soldiers during Sulla and Pompey's campaigns in Asia Minor in the early first century BC.[36] Finally, the goddess of love possessed warlike aspects in both Greece and Rome, where she was worshipped as Venus Victrix.[37] Furthermore, she had a special significance for some of the Roman generals,

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[32] For a detailed version of the story, see Plut. *Am. narr.* 774 C–D. According to Pausanias, who also reports the sacrifice but not the dream, the sisters hanged themselves after the violation; he lets us understand that Epaminondas (rather than Pelopidas) was aware of the mythical feud and took advantage of it (9,13,5–6).

[33] Boulay 2009, esp. 118–119. Some tetradrachms of Clazomenae from the 2nd c. BC depicting Zeus Soter Epiphanes apparently celebrate a victorious battle in which the god had a crucial role (*op cit.*, *pass.*). On manifestations of Zeus in military conflicts, see also Petridou 2015, 138–141.

[34] Herodotus (if the passage is authentic) quotes an oracle that promised that Zeus and Nike would bring victory to the Greeks (8,77). Cf. Hdt. 9,7A; Plut. *Arist.* 19,6–7; 20,4; 21,1; Aesch. *Pers.* 823–831. For the establishment of the cult of Zeus Soterius following the Battle of Plataea, see Petridou 2015, 121–122.

[35] Kragelund 2001, 92; Harris 2009, 179. The goddess seems to have helped Sulla on a later occasion as well (Plut. *Sull.* 27,6). Cf. also the senate's meeting in Bellona's (Ἐνυώ) temple at Plut. *Sull.* 7,6.

[36] James 1966, 274–275.

[37] For the armed Aphrodite in Greece, see Budin 2010.

and Pompey's episode dream ought to be read against this background; Pompey himself had commissioned the building of a temple-theatre complex dedicated to Venus Victrix, completed just a few years before the Battle of Pharsalus, which was the scene of his dream in Plutarch's account (and, incidentally, of Julius Caesar's assassination in 44 BC). However, in Appian's version, the temple of the dream is juxtaposed with a preceeding mention of a temple that Julius Caesar had promised to Venus earlier during the night (*B Civ.* 2,10,68). As noted by Appian and Plutarch (18b), the *gens Iulia* traced their ancestry to her (cf. Suet. *Iul.* 6); to emphasize this connection, following his victory at Pharsalus, Caesar fulfilled his votum by dedicating a temple not to Venus Victrix but to Venus Genetrix (App. *B Civ.* 2,15,102).[38]

The deceased persons who appear in the dreams are either political predecessors or relatives of the dreamer or his opponent. The three dreams featuring Alexander the Great (6–8) are set in the context of the Diadochi's struggle for power in a series of wars following the division of his empire, and they reflect the importance of (the deified) Alexander's person for the Hellenistic rulers in establishing legitimacy.[39] Caecina's close call in the battle is suggested by the appearance of Varus, who reaches for him from the swamp but whom he pushes back. This may have been a wise choice, since following dead people in dreams could be a bad sign.[40] Germanicus' dream of his late grandmother

[38] She had a special importance to Sulla as well. At some point of his career, he adopted the epithet Epaphroditus ("favourite of Venus") (Plut. *Sull.* 34; App. *B Civ.* 1,11,97), and he once made a dedication to Aphrodite in Aphrodisias, as the goddess had appeared to him in a dream and helped him win a battle (App. *B Civ.* 1,11,97) (Brody 2001, 106: in 89/88 BC). Note that although Plutarch seems to suggest an allegorical, prophetic reading of Pompey's dream (18ab), Lucan, whose version is closer to his than Appian's account, also offers an alternative option and leaves the matter undecided (7,7–44).

[39] For dreams of the Diadochi that feature Alexander in Plutarch, see Romero-González 2019. Lucian records a dream in which Alexander instructed Antiochus I Soter about a watchword before a battle with the Galatians (*Laps.* 9).

[40] Cf. the dream that presaged the death of the poet Cinna, in which the recently deceased Julius Caesar invited him for supper and led him by the hand to a dark place (Plut. *Brut.* 20; *Caes.* 68). Sulla dreamed, a little before his death, that his son asked him to join him and his mother (Plut. *Sull.* 37). Cicero's dream of the late C. Marius leading him by the right hand out from a strange place presaged his return from exile, not his death (Cic. *Div.* 1,59; Val. Max. 1,7,5). (Cf. also Suet. *Ner.* 46.) Joining right hands (*dexiosis*) with the gods or being led by them by the hand could be a sign of approaching death (Suet. *Iul.* 81,3; Cass. Dio 44,17) or the god's benevolence (Plut. *Mor.* 83 C–D; Arr. *Anab.* 2,18).

giving him a toga predicted his success, however,[41] and Sulla's peculiar dream (14), in which he overhears the elder Marius warning his son (as if peeking into the latter's dream), is favourable to him but not to Marius.

The enigmatic unnamed, usually male, dream figure of the consuls' dream(s), taller and better-looking than humans, appears throughout ancient historiography, starting with Herodotus; its nature and origin are often not explained in prose, though dreams featuring it are sometimes considered divine. Whereas Homeric dream figures, including both gods and phantoms fashioned by them, tend to adopt the appearance of a person familiar to the sleeper to deliver messages from the gods, in historiography since the Classical period the anonymous dream figure is a stock character of epiphany dreams.[42]

The episode dreams, except for Sulla's non-symbolic dream (14), feature the dreamer engaging or involved in the action of the dream rather than passively observing it. The activities (in addition to those already mentioned) include acting or receiving applause in a theatre; being released from fetters and walking; one's teeth falling out; bleeding and being spattered with blood; smiting a city (if we interpret ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ as a passive agent in 11) or one's enemies with thunderbolts; sailing and being shipwrecked; dedicating or decorating a temple; and performing a sacrifice.[43]

Since the task of identifying and deciphering symbolic elements in the dream reports is usually left to the reader, labelling an item as symbolic and

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These examples may suggest the importance of touching in dreams. In waking life, contact with corpses could lead to ritual pollution; could this belief have sometimes extended to the dream-world (even if the deceased seemed to be alive in the dream)?

[41] Artemidorus claims that receiving clothes from a deceased person was, in fact, favourable (2,57).

[42] E.g. Hdt. 2,139; 152; 5,55–56; 62; Livy 21,22; Val. Max. 1,7,1 *ext*. On occasion, the anonymous figure is female, as in the dream that informs Socrates of his approaching death (Plat. *Crit.* 44a–b). The description of the figure's unusual beauty and size evokes accounts of gods appearing to mortals, e.g., in the *Homeric Hymns* (2,188–191; 3,448–466; 5,81–106; 7,1–24); cf. also the description of Odysseus after Athena increases his stature and youth (Hom. *Od.* 16,172–185).

[43] Brownson (2001, 315) notes the use of the verb διαβαίνω in the dream report, and in another sense when the young soldiers report their finding (3). Cf. the seers' "etymological" interpretation of Alexander's dream (Plut. *Alex.* 24,4–5). According to Artemidorus, fetters mean delay and hindrance (among other things) as they are used to restrain (2,47). Thunderbolt dreams: cf. Xen. *An.* 3,1,11–15; Plut. *Alex.* 2; Plut. *Ant.* 16; Ael. *VH* 1,13; *NA* 6,62; cf. Artem. 2,8–9. Sailing in a storm predicts danger (Artem. 2,23), whereas sacrificing in a customary way is a good omen (2,33).

attributing a meaning to it is inevitably somewhat a matter of subjective reading. Yet, some of the dream reports yield to fruitful speculation on the (primary) referents of dream symbols within the narrative contexts: the Nisaean horse – an esteemed breed and an emblem of imperial power in Persia – undoubtedly represents Alexander's majesty and prowess; the teeth Pyrrhus lost in his dream (10) might correspond to the elephants he lost in waking life; and applause in a theatre must signify the end in Pompey's dream.[44] Such context-related but straightforward correspondences based on metaphorical or metonymical representation resemble Artermidorean *oneirokrisia*, which largely relies on situational exegesis of dream symbols κατὰ ἀναλογίαν (Artem. 2,57; 3,47; 4,28).[45] In addition, a few of the dream reports seem to represent, in allegorical form, entire sequences of events – a calm sea followed by a storm predicted the change in Mithridates' fate when his escape was interrupted by an ambush, and the Athenian generals' victory in a drama contest followed by their death corresponded with their victory in the battle and their subsequent fate, as most of them were executed for having failed to collect the bodies of the fallen due to a storm (Diod. Sic. 13,101–102).[46]

As in the case with the Athenian generals' deaths, some correspondences between the dreams and real-life events that followed can be considered more than symbolic. The battle and the grain in Eumenes' dream, and the mire mixed with blood in Caecina's dream, are materialized and acted out when the prophecy of the dream becomes fulfilled (cf. pp. 151–153). In these dream reports, symbolic elements mingle with and blend into "real" elements of the dreamer's waking-life experience.

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[44] For the Nisaean horse, see Hdt. 7,40,2–3; 9,20; Strab. 11,13,7; 11,14,9; Arr. *Anab.* 7,3,4; 7,13,1. They were known as exceptionally brave warhorses: Amm. Marc. 23,6,30. In the dream, Alexander lies in his sickbed before mounting the horse; is it a coincidence that Demetrius had fallen ill (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 10,1)? Dreams associated with losing teeth: Hdt. 6,107; Cass. Dio 66,1; cf. Artem. 1,31. Oddly, Plutarch claims that Pyrrhus had few teeth left (*Pyrrh.* 3,4). Another theatre dream that anticipated the dreamer's death: Plut. *Dem.* 29.

[45] An illustrative example of the importance of context is blood: contrast the blood that covers Varus in Caecina's dream, and the sacrificial blood spattered on Germanicus, with the blood-smeared snake in Clytemnestra's dream in a fragment of Stesichorus and the blood Aphrodite spattered on Hipparchus (Plut. *De sera* 555 A–B).

[46] Cf. p. 153. Acting in a dream means that waking-life will resemble the plot of the play if one remembers it (Artem. 4,37).

Reporting and interpreting the dreams

Most of the passages continue with descriptions of the events that took place immediately after the dream, or on the following morning before the expected battle: waking up and reflecting on the dream and/or discussing it with a select person or group of people and, sometimes, reporting it to the troops.

Sometimes the dreamer attempted to interpret the dream by himself upon waking: Eumenes, for example, concluded that his dream was in his favour (τὴν ὄψιν εἴκαζεν εἶναι πρὸς αὑτοῦ, 6), and Pyrrhus, basing his interpretation on an earlier experience, predicted the coming of a great misfortune (μεγάλην ἔσεσθαι συμφορὰν μαντευόμενος, 10) in the Battle of Beneventum. Lucullus, on the other hand, was unable to understand what his dream prophecied (τὴν μὲν ὄψιν οὐκ εἶχε συμβαλεῖν εἰς ὅ τι φέροι, 16a) before capturing Sinope and finding the statue of Autolycus.

In about half of the accounts, the dreamer discussed his dream with others. Occasionally, he hurried to share it or summoned a council meeting to discuss it upon waking up (ἐξεγρόμενος, 1), sometimes while it was still night (ἔτι νυκτὸς οὔσης, 15) or very early in the morning: at daybreak (ἐπεὶ ὄρθρος ἦν, 3; *luce proxima*, 5b; μεθ' ἡμέραν, 5d), or before leading his army into battle at daybreak (ἅμ' ἡμέρᾳ, 11; μεθ' ἡμέραν, 13).[47] Obviously, they did so because they believed that the dreams might be relevant to the upcoming confrontation.[48]

Usually, the dream was initially shared with a small circle of intimates: the most experienced and eldest citizens (οἱ ἐμπειρότατοι καὶ πρεσβύτατοι τῶν πολιτῶν, 1); a seer (ὁ μάντις) and the generals (οἱ στρατηγοί) (2); the seers and the commanders (οἱ μάντεις καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες, 4); the leaders (οἱ ἡγεμόνες) and friends/companions (οἱ φίλοι) (11); co-commander (ὁ συνάρχων, 13);[49] or friends (οἱ φίλοι, 15, 18c). The consuls, apparently, discussed the dream first with each other (*inter se*, 5a; *inter eos*, 5b; ἀλλήλοις … πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 5d), and subsequently in front of a council of legates and tribunes (*legati tribunique*, 5a)

[47] We do not know at what time of day Scipio gave his exhortative speech, but Polybius asserts that the attack began the following day (τῇ ἐπαύριον) (10,12,1).

[48] Pompey, according to Appian, told his dream to his friends who woke him up, perhaps without prior deliberation (18c).

[49] Apparently, Q. Pompeius Rufus, who was Sulla's co-consul in 88 BC (Plut. *Sull.* 6,10). He had recently been stripped of his office by Marius' friends (Plut. *Sull.* 8,3–4).

or the leaders of the army (οἱ πρῶτοι τοῦ στρατοπέδου, 5d). Livy also mentions a consultation of haruspices (5a) before the council meeting, so presumably they might have heard about the dreams before the army leaders. On these occasions, the dreamer relied not only on his own judgement as to the significance of his dream, but made himself dependant on those to whom he reported it, whether friends or professional interpreters.

Some dreams were occasioned by a puzzling situation. Before Arimnestus' dream the Greeks had been perplexed by the Delphic prophecy, thinking that the god wanted them to change the battle site from Plataea to Attica. Before they proceeded to do so, the dream provided a solution that seemed strategically preferable and was, in fact, found to suit the prophecy, which had been misunderstood. Before the Battle of Arginusae, the Athenians had suffered continuous reverses and were running out of military personnel (Diod. Sic. 13,97); the dream of their commander seemed to prophecy victory at last, even if at a high cost. Xenophon's dream occurred when the Greek force was stuck in hostile lands and there seemed to be no way out of the peril. Pyrrhus' third dream (11) came at the end of the first day of a siege, which had been marked by his unsuccessful attempt to storm Sparta (Plut. *Pyrrh.* 28). And Sulla was unable to determine whether it was a lesser evil to advance against Rome or let Marius and his supporters continue terrorizing the city, until the dream pushed him towards a decision. In these cases, the dream seemed to present a solution to a problematic situation, or at least an indication that things would work out for the better.

At other times, rather than offering a solution to a problem, the dream presented a problem that had to be solved before the expected battle. The Thebans were bidden to sacrifice a girl before the Battle of Leuctra, and the Romans learned that one of their consuls would have to give up his own life if they hoped to defeat the Latins.[50] In both types of situation, the dream's message might need to be deciphered so that appropriate measures could be taken, and the interpretation could be negotiated with military leaders and/or the religious experts who accompanied armies. Careless interpretation could be dangerous,

[50] Dreams demanding human sacrifice to ensure victory are reported occasionally; see p. 149 for Agesilaus' dream. According to a doubtful source, during the Cimbrian War (late 2nd c. BC), Marius the Elder learned from a dream that he would win if he sacrificed his daughter, which he purportedly did ([Plut.] *Par. min.* 310 D).

and sometimes disagreement arose: Pelopidas' dream sparked opinions for and against human sacrifice, and, in the case of Pyrrhus' dream (11), Lysimachus disagreed about the others' favourable interpretation. In a like manner, although Pompey's friends and army immediately drew the conclusion (be it noted, without the consultation of experts) that his dream signified victory, Pompey himself had a premonition that the opposite might be true.

Often, the dream did not solve or present a specific problem, but seemed to encourage or exhort the dreamer. Eumenes' "strange vision" (ὄψις ἀλλόκοτος) (6) and Pyrrhus' first (8) dream resulted in them becoming emboldened (ἐπερρώσθη), and Eumenes based his choice of watchword (σύνθημα) on his dream, clearly convinced that this – along with the cultic action of decorating his army – would help secure Demeter's aid. Sulla's first dream endowed him with confidence (θαρσήσας τῇ ὄψει, 13) and helped him to make up his mind to attack Rome; on a later occasion, he was eager (πρόθυμος, 14) to fight Marius due to a dream. Germanicus, we are told, was encouraged by the omen (*auctus omine*) of his joyful dream (*laeta quies*) (20). After such an experience, the dreamer might tell the dream to a colleague or friends, perhaps not so much to consult as to share information of divine intervention. Xenophon, for example, feeling hopeful due to his dream that things would work out (ἐλπίδας ἔχει καλῶς ἔσεσθαι), told it to his friend and colleague Cheirisophus, who likewise rejoiced (ἥδετο) (3). On the other hand, dreams might offer aid in addition to hope: Lucullus was informed by Aphrodite of a favourable opportunity to overtake his enemies in a surprise attack, and, in Arimnestus' and Scipio's dreams, strategic advice was provided by the gods who appeared to them.

These accounts demonstrate that a dream considered favourable might incite a feeling of joy and confidence that all would go well. Pyrrhus was undoubtedly encouraged when he not only dreamed of being happy (αὐτὸν χαίρειν), but the feeling was so strong that he was woken up by it (ὑπὸ τῆς χαρᾶς ἐξεγρόμενος) (11). Joy might also follow a successful response to a dream; so the Thebans' seers and commanders, despite initial concern,[51] rejoiced (χαίροντες, 4) once they had found a suitable victim and sacrificed it. But dreams could also have the opposite effect: the unlucky signs (σημεῖα μοχθηρά) that Demetrius

[51] Note the use of the verb διαπορέω ("to be at a loss") (4) and cf. the ἀπορία ("perplexity, distress") that, according to Xenophon, had been the prevailing sentiment among the Greeks prior to his dream and the discovery of the ford (3).

and Antigonus experienced, including the dream, dampened their resolve (κατεδουλοῦτο τὴν γνώμην αὐτῶν) (7), Pyrrhus was upset (ταραχθείς, 10) by his second dream, and Caecina's dreadful dream (*dira quies*) terrified (*terruit*) him (19). According to Appian, Pompey, after his dream, felt hesitation (ὄκνος) and alarm (δέος) (18c), while, according to Plutarch, he found the dream both encouraging and troubling (τὰ μὲν ἐθάρρει, τὰ δὲ ὑπέθραττεν αὐτὸν ἡ ὄψις, 18b).

In addition to consultation with a select few, a dream might also be shared with the entire army (τὸ στρατόπεδον, 4; τὰ πλήθη, 12; ὁ στρατὸς ἅπας, 18c), either after discussing it with a more intimate circle or (as far as we are told) even without such a consultation. The ancient sources testify that many soldiers sought prophecies during campaigns from all kinds of seers and soothsayers travelling with armies.[52] It seems that the generals were well aware of the motivational potential of dreams, and sometimes used it to encourage and embolden soldiers right before battles. Polybius mentions that Scipio's skilful speech, with its reference to divine providence (θεοῦ πρόνοια), was able to create a great enthusiasm (μεγάλη ὁρμή) and zeal (προθυμία) in the young servicemen (νεανίσκοι) (12). Elsewhere he notes that Scipio was accustomed to employing invented dream reports to boost his political career (Polyb. 10,2; 10,4–5).[53] In a more contentious manner, Pyrrhus accused Lysimachus of resorting to "silly rabble-rousing" (πυλαϊκῆ ὀχλαγωγία) and stupidity (ἀσοφία), when he did not agree with the others' favourable reading of the dream (11): it seems that, like Polybius, Pyrrhus was aware of the usefulness of dream reports for propagandistic pursuits. His criticism of his colleague may also have resulted partly from his awareness of the detrimental effects that an unfavourable prophecy might have on the soldiers' morale; this must have been what motivated the Athenian generals to allow reporting to the troops only the auspicious part of the seers' interpretation (2).[54] It might also partly explain why Pompey kept quiet about his evil premonition as word of his dream spread throughout the army, with the

[52] McCallum 2017, 133–136. These were probably different people than the *manteis* consulted by the generals.

[53] Cf. Livy (26,19) on Scipio's use of divine propaganda. Cf. also Eunus' use of invented dreams and omens (Diod. Sic. 34/35,2,4–9) and Q. Sertorius' use of the barbarians' superstition (δεισιδαιμονία) to manipulate them by claiming that he would discuss important decisions in his dreams with a doe gifted to him by Diana (Plut. *Sert.* 11; 20; cf. Gell. *NA* 15,22.)

[54] The whole army (ὅλη ἡ δύναμις, 2) was perhaps only informed of the favourable sacrificial omens, but not of the dream.

result that his friends and soldiers, in their ignorance (ἄγνοια) of Caesar's *votum*, rejoiced (ἥδοντο) and prepared to celebrate the expected victory with enthusiasm (ὁρμή) and disdain or neglect (καταφρόνησις) (18c). A more important reason, though, was probably his apprehension over the unavoidability of divinely-ordained fate, a subject to which we shall shortly return.[55]

Literary convention or a feature of ancient warfare?

As we have observed, allowing for variations, the dream reports share a similar setting as well as similarities of structure and content. Each of them is set in a context in which a battle is likely or inevitable in the near future (typically the following day) and, sometimes, an urgent problem relating to it has occurred. The story progresses along the following lines: at night, a general sleeping in the camp has a dream that feels important; his reflections on and/or emotional response to the dream are described; alternatively, or in addition, he reports it before or early in the morning to a select few, who discuss it and agree upon appropriate measures, and/or to the whole army; shortly afterwards, the battle follows and confirms the dream's prophecy (even if it was contrary to the general's beliefs or what was reported to the troops). I suggest that the passages can and should be viewed as instances of a literary motif: more specifically, a typical situation that recurs in the ancient historiography of warfare. However, if we are willing to accept the existence of the "general's dream before battle" motif, the question arises of what are the implications for the historical plausibility of the passages; i.e., were these typical situations only in literature, or also in real life?[56]

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[55] For the motivating effect on larger audiences of dreams believed to indicate victory or a successful expedition, see e.g. Hdt. 7,19; Diod. Sic. 16,66; Plut. *Luc.* 10 (cf. also Diod. Sic. 19,90); and, for the demoralizing effect of ominous dreams on crowds, see e.g. Diod. Sic. 17,41; Curt. 4,3.

[56] As dream reports are inherently unreliable (see, e.g. Harris 2009, 97–100), it makes little sense to ask if any individual dream "really" happened, or how accurately a given literary description captures the original dream experience. There are basically three possible origins for a dream report: a dream was actually seen; invention by the "dreamer"; and invention by someone else. Although we can speculate on the origin of ancient dream reports, certainty is unattainable, but this does not prevent us from asking whether reporting and interpreting dreams was actually practiced on military missions.

The origin of the literary motif is perhaps easier to trace than that of individual dream reports. An epic antecedent to the reports discussed in this paper is found in the famous description of Agamemnon's baneful dream (οὖλος ὄνειρος, *Il.* 2,6) in the beginning of the second book of the *Iliad*. The setting and basic structure are similar as in the later historiographical accounts: a problematic situation has occurred (Achilles' refusal to fight, in the previous book); the general's dream (an epiphany) seems to offer a solution (a quick victory without Achilles' help) (16–40); the dreamer wakes up and summons a council meeting at daybreak to discuss the dream and decide on a course of action (41–86); and, at once, they begin to gather the troops and prepare for battle (87 ff.).

In addition to Agamemnon's dream, the motif also occasionally features in poetry of the Hellenistic and Imperial eras. In Posidippus' Epigram 33, a certain Aristoxeinus is encouraged by a misleading (or misinterpreted) dream to engage in battle, in which he is killed.[57] Vergil provides an elaborate description of a dream that Aeneas experienced on the night Troy fell, in which the ghost of Hector warned him of the imminent danger and exhorted him to escape the burning city (*Aen.* 2,268–297).[58] Lucan's account of Pompey's false dream (*vana imago*, 7,8) might be an instance of a historical dream report adapted to verse, although we should note that it predates Plutarch and Appian's descriptions. Much later, Quintus Smyrnaeus describes a deceitful dream (δολόεις ὄνειρος, 1,125) sent by Athena that Penthesileia dreamt the night before she was killed in battle by Achilles (1,118–137); and, in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, the Indian king Deriades is roused to battle by a disguised Athena who appears to him in a treacherous dream (δόλιος ὄνειρος, 26,7) (26,1–37). In prose, the motif rarely occurs outside of historiography, except for Agamemnon's dream, which is cited by several authors.[59]

While it would be too bold to claim that the later descriptions in historians and biographers were modelled on Agamemnon's dream or other poetic examples, we can assume quite confidently that the *Iliad*'s account of his

[57] It is unclear whether he is a general or an ordinary soldier. For an analysis, see Bilbija – Flinterman 2015, 170–171.

[58] Cf. the dreams that warned Mithridates (17) and Augustus' physician (see n. 5) when an attack was already underway.

[59] E.g. Plat. *Rep.* 2,383a; Arist. *Soph. el.* 166b; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 56,9–10; Artem. 1,2; Lucian, *Iupp. trag.* 40. See also n. 39 for Antiochus' dream.

dream was known to all of them and may have influenced the formation of the literary motif. At the same time, several arguments can be adduced in favour of the conclusion that the practice of scrutinizing generals' dreams before battles, and at other important moments during warfare, was an actual part of ancient military culture that, in Greece, may have been a continuous tradition since Homeric times.

Firstly, as noted above, it has been argued convincingly that interpretating omens was important during warfare, and there is no reason to assume that dreams were any different from other types of omens.[60] Secondly, the motif is attested frequently in historiography and biography but only occasionally in other genres, even though there is an abundance of other types of dream reports in most genres of ancient literature. In poetry, the motif is associated mainly with misleading dreams that gave false hope of a quickly-attainable victory, probably in an echo of the *Iliad*, whereas most of the dreams discussed in this paper were favourable, and only two of them were falsely presumed to predict victory (11, 18).[61] This suggests that the influence of poetry on the formation of the historiographical motif was limited at best, which makes it likelier that the motif was influenced by the real-life practice of dream interpretation instead. Thirdly, the authors sometimes provide an earlier source for a dream report (5c, 9), or evidence that there were more than one version in circulation of a dream report or the events surrounding it (14, 16, 18). This suggests that these dream reports, at least, were not invented by the authors in question, although it does not rule out the chance that they were invented by their predecessors.[62]

Accepting that dream-sharing and interpretation was an actual feature of ancient warfare, of course, does not mean that we should consider the dream

[60] There is, besides, inscriptional evidence for the observance of prophetic dreams during one military campaign, at least. According to a trilingual decree issued after Ptolemy IV's victory in the Battle of Raphia (217 BC), the gods had appeared to him in a dream before the battle and promised him assistance. However, the dream report contained in the Raphia Decree may owe more to the Egyptian tradition of recording pharaohs' dreams rather than Greek customs (Renberg 2016, 88–92 and n. 141; cf. Weber 1999, 8–9). Evidently, Ptolemy had still to learn of local customs, since a recurring dream haunted him after the battle because he had sacrificed four elephants to celebrate the victory (Plut. *De soll. an.* 972 B–C; Ael. *NA* 7.40).

[61] Aeneas' dream must have been inspired by Achilles' dream of Patroclus' ghost at *Iliad* 23,57–110.

[62] Lucan could certainly have influenced Plutarch and Appian, but we cannot conclude that he invented Pompey's dream. On Plutarch's sources for the *Life of Pompey*, see De Wet 1981.

reports to be accurate representations of historical events. The fact that the evidence under discussion is of a literary nature means that we must reflect our reading against the question of how much it represents a reliable documentation of past events, and how much is fiction. When dealing with ancient historiography and biography, we can expect the specific literary goals to occasionally override the more general goal of faithful reproduction of the past. In addition to passing on knowledge about the past, historiography and biography would have (and would have been expected to fulfil) educational, philosophical, and aesthetic goals. This does not necessarily entail that the ancient historians are unreliable – in all likelihood, they are much more often reliable than unreliable, provided that one is able to recognize the conventions of the genre, such as the practice of attributing speeches composed by the author to their historical characters and the use of moral anecdotes (*exempla*).[63] It does mean, however, that they often selected and presented their material with other aspirations than simply informing the reader about past events.

As with their treatment of speeches, it seems that, when balancing between the various goals of their work, the ancient historians sometimes embraced the inclusion of invented elements as far as they were sufficiently plausible and served a purpose, such as illustrating the moral character of a protagonist, arguing a point, or educating the reader. The employment of established literary models to describe the past could have provided a productive way of representing novel elements, including dream reports. Such models could even have been used to construct narratives, in a sense, by fitting genuine events into stereotypical storylines that may have preconditioned the historians' own sense of history and felt quite "real" to them. If so, it might have seemed appropriate to preface a historical battle with a conventional prelude that included a dream report.

Furthermore, as we have seen, Plutarch and Appian report different versions of Lucullus' and Pompey's dreams, and the differences may as well derive from their use of different sources as that each author interpreted, adapted, and elaborated their source material in a different way. The existence of divergent narratives may indicate that dream reports were modified, from time

[63] On the historical authenticity of battle exhortations in ancient historiography, see Hansen 1993, esp. the conclusion on p. 179: "(…) history has been distorted by rhetoric, but it is not always the authors who have misled their readers, but rather the readers who have misread the historians by assuming that such speeches were actually delivered." The work of Valerius Maximus and the *Parallela minora* are collections of *exempla* rather than histories.

to time, when the historical tradition was passed down, which could relate to their use for various literary purposes, although influence from oral tradition in the emergence of variant versions is also possible.

Moreover, there was probably an ongoing interplay between the historical tradition (oral and written) and current religious practice, and so the echo of a literary motif could have been transmitted from historical (and poetical) descriptions to the experiencing and acting out of current situations and thence back to literature. Awareness of historical precedents and models might precondition one to recognize similar events occurring to oneself and thus influence the lived experience. This process is seen at work in some of the passages; the Thebans, when weighing the importance of Pelopidas' dream, recalled a dream that Agesilaus had experienced a few decades earlier while preparing to set out from Aulis for his Persian expedition of 396–394 BC, and referred to his refusal to comply with the dream's demand as the cause for his failure (4).[64] Much later, Lucullus was motivated to take his dream seriously when he remembered the advice that Sulla had given to him in his Memoirs (16a).

From the literary point of view, dream reports could provide a useful tool for the ancient authors to employ for various ends, such as depicting the divine forces intervening in human life and history, creating dramatic tension and poetic analogies, as well as illustrating the mental states and moral disposition of their characters as construed by them.[65] Dreams could also be used to excuse

[64] Cf. Plut. *Ages.* 6. Agesilaus' dream, in turn, was influenced by the local myth about the sacrifice of Iphigenia, by which Agamemnon had secured Artemis' favour before the Trojan expedition. The incident had happened during Pelopidas' youth, and there must have been people around who remembered it. The use of precedents in interpreting dreams – which may have predisposed the ancients to contemplate their dream-lives by seeking parallel incidents in literature and mythical precursors – is a feature of Artemidorus' empirical approach to his craft (Artem. 1, *prol.*).

[65] Pelling (1997, 209–210) argues that the psychological aspects of dreams become progressively more pronounced in both Greek and Latin historiography. From this point of view, the haunting dreams and visions of people who had committed violent acts or seem to have suffered from some kind of war trauma are particularly fascinating: e.g. Plut. *Mar.* 45,2–3 (Marius' nightmares and run-down condition near the end of his life); Plut. *De sera* 555 A–D (dreams of several moral transgressors); Suet. *Ner.* 34,4; 46,1 (the dreams and, perhaps, waking-visions that Nero suffered after having had his mother murdered); Plut. *Brut.* 48; 36–37; 69 (the φάσμα that visited Brutus before the Battle of Philippi, apparently while he was awake; cf. the rather similar story about Cassius Parmensis in Val. Max. 1,7,7).

choices that might otherwise seem unsatisfactorily explained, as in the case of Lucullus' decision to liberate Sinope, rather than subduing it (16).[66] In other words, dream reports could help prepare or explain the behaviour and decisions of historical characters and, ultimately, historical outcomes.

To briefly illustrate the multifaceted potential of dream reports and their consequent ambiguity in the context of historiography, let us look at the description of Sulla's invasion of Rome after his dream to see how divine and psychological considerations may come together within a dramatically structured sequence. In the dream, Sulla was handed a thunderbolt by a goddess so that he might wield it against his enemies. A few sentences later, a graphic description follows of his entrance into the city holding a torch and ordering his troops to set on fire the buildings that chanced on his way:

> τῶν δὲ περὶ τὸν Βάσιλλον εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἐμπεσόντων καὶ κρατούντων, ὁ πολὺς καὶ ἄνοπλος δῆμος ἀπὸ τῶν τεγῶν κεράμῳ καὶ λίθῳ βάλλοντες ἐπέσχον αὐτοὺς τοῦ πρόσω χωρεῖν καὶ συνέστειλαν εἰς τὸ τεῖχος. ἐν τούτῳ δὲ ὁ Σύλλας παρῆν ἤδη, καὶ συνιδὼν τὸ γινόμενον ἐβόα τὰς οἰκίας ὑφάπτειν, καὶ λαβὼν δᾷδα καιομένην ἐχώρει πρῶτος αὐτός, καὶ τοὺς τοξότας ἐκέλευε χρῆσθαι τοῖς πυροβόλοις ἄνω τῶν στεγασμάτων ἐφιεμένους, κατ᾽ οὐδένα λογισμόν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐμπαθὴς ὢν καὶ τῷ θυμῷ παραδεδωκὼς τὴν τῶν πρασσομένων ἡγεμονίον, ὅς γε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μόνον ἑώρα, φίλους δὲ καὶ συγγενεῖς καὶ οἰκείους εἰς οὐδένα λόγον θέμενος οὐδ᾽ οἴκτον κατῄει διὰ πυρός, ᾧ τῶν αἰτίων καὶ μὴ διάγνωσις οὐκ ἦν. (Plut. *Sull.* 9,6–7)

> "Basillus and his men burst into the city and were forcing their way along, when the unarmed multitude pelted them with stones and tiles from the roofs of the houses, stopped their further progress, and crowded them back to the wall. But by this time Sulla was at hand, and seeing what was going on, shouted orders to set fire to the houses, and seizing a blazing torch, led the way himself, and ordered his archers to use their fire-bolts

[66] Cf. Otanes' sudden decision to resettle Samos in the late 6th c. BC (Hdt. 3.149); and Lysander's choice of ending the siege of Aphytis (ca. 404 BC) (Plut. *Lys.* 20; Paus. 3,18,3); both decisions were inspired by dreams. We naturally cannot know if the stories originated at the time of the events described or later, in response to a need for explanation.

> and shoot them up at the roofs. This he did not from any calm calculation, but in a passion, and having surrendered to his anger the command over his actions, since he thought only of his enemies, and without any regard or even pity for friends and kindred and relations, made his entry by the aid of fire, which made no distinction between the guilty and the innocent." (Trans. Perrin 1916, 355)

The description of Sulla leading the assault with a torch in his hand and his archers directing blazing arrows at the citizens calls to mind the thunderbolt of the dream, and raises the inevitable question: Was Sulla inspired by the dream to make his entrance into the city in such a way, or is the juxtaposition of the dream with the execution of the invasion rather a literary means deliberately employed by Plutarch for dramatic effect?[67] While the latter might seem likelier, we read elsewhere that Sulla's faith in dreams was attested in his Memoirs (Plut. *Luc.* 23; *Sull.* 37) and an inscription on a dedication to Aphrodite (App. *B Civ.* 1,11,97; see n. 38). It is possible that the whole narrative, including the analysis of Sulla's mental state during the attack and the poetic similitude of the brutal invasion to his dream, actually originates in his own account of the events.[68]

Another dramatic juxtaposition between descriptions of a dream and the subsequent battle is found in Tacitus' account of Caecina's dream and the battle at the Pontes Longi. The swampy landscape and the blood-covered appearance of the ghost in the dream are materialized in the horrid scene of battle and its aftermath on the following day:

> *Coepta luce missae in latera legiones, metu an contumacia, locum deseruere, capto propere campo umentia ultra. Neque tamen Arminius,*

[67] Note also the enemies falling (πίπτειν) due to the lightning strikes in the dream (13), as one might fall from a roof upon being hit by a blazing arrow.

[68] Harris believes that the story is probably authentic and might derive from the Memoirs (2009, 179–180); Kragelund is more reserved, and his point that Plutarch introduces the dream report by "it is said" rather than citing the Memoirs as the source is valid (2001, 92–93). One could argue, in addition, that the depiction of Sulla in this passage is not favourable to him, since he ends up smiting not only his enemies, as the dream instructed, but his friends and relatives as well. There is a denarius dated to 44 BC that is supposed to depict Sulla's dream, but the interpretation is highly dubious: Carotta 2016, 153–159. Needless to say, such a representation at such an early date would lend credibility to the story regarding the dream.

quamquam libero incursu, statim prorupit; sed ut haesere caeno fossisque impedimenta, turbati circum milites, incertus signorum ordo, utque tali in tempore sibi quisque properus et lentae adversum imperia aures, inrumpere Germanos iubet, clamitans: "En Varus eodemque iterum fato vinctae legiones!" Simul haec et cum delectis scindit agmen equisque maxime vulnera ingerit. Illi, sanguine suo et lubrico paludum lapsantes, excussis rectoribus, disicere obvios, proterere iacentis. Plurimus circa aquilas labor, quae neque ferri adversum ingruentia tela neque figi limosa humo poterant. Caecina, dum sustentat aciem, suffosso equo delapsus, circumveniebatur, ni prima legio sese opposuisset. (…) Struendum vallum, petendus agger; amissa magna ex parte per quae egeritur humus aut exciditur caespes; non tentoria manipulis, non fomenta sauciis; infectos caeno aut cruore cibos dividentes, funestas tenebras et tot hominum milibus unum iam reliquum diem lamentabantur. (Tac. *Ann.* 1,65)

"Day broke, and the legions sent to the wings, either through fear or wilfulness, abandoned their post, hurriedly occupying a level piece of ground beyond the morass. Arminius, however, though the way was clear for the attack, did not immediately deliver his onslaught. But when he saw the baggage-train caught in the mire and trenches; the troops around it in confusion; the order of the standards broken, and (as may be expected in a crisis) every man quick to obey his impulse and slow to hear the word of command, he ordered the Germans to break in. 'Varus and the legions,' he cried, 'enchained once more in the old doom!' And, with the word, he cut through the column at the head of a picked band, their blows being directed primarily at the horses. Slipping in their own blood and the marsh-slime, the beasts threw their riders, scattered all they met, and trampled the fallen underfoot. The eagles caused the greatest difficulty of all, as it was impossible either to advance them against the storm of spears or to plant them in the water-logged soil. Caecina, while attempting to keep the front intact, fell with his horse stabbed under him, and was being rapidly surrounded when the first legion interposed. (…) A rampart had to be raised and material sought for the earthwork; and most of the tools for excavating soil or cutting turf had been lost. There were no tents for the companies, no dressings for the wounded, and as they divided

> their rations, foul with dirt or blood, they bewailed the deathlike gloom and that for so many thousands of men but a single day now remained." (Trans. Jackson 1931, 355–357)

The frightening appearance of Varus' ghost dramatically forecasts the appearance of Caecina's army following the disastrous battle. The association is strengthened by Arminius' ominous exclamation. As in Plutarch's account of Sulla's dream (13), the description of the dream is aligned with the rest of the narrative so conveniently that one must ask whether we are dealing with literary elaboration, or even the innovation of a dream report by Tacitus.

The same applies to the Euripidean plays in Thrasyllus' dream (2). The *Phoenician Women*, performed a few years before the Battle of Arginusae amid turbulent times, concerns the war of the Seven against Thebes, whose fate foreshadows the death of the Athenian generals. The fate of the unburied fallen is also hinted at in the dream, since the *Suppliants*, played by the generals' competitors in the dream, centres on the effort of the Argive women to achieve a decent burial for their dead who have fallen in the assault on Thebes. It is likely that the dream, with its sophisticated references to contemporary literature, was invented after the battle, perhaps by Plutarch himself.[69]

In the remainder of the article, I shall discuss religious aspects of the literary motif, which brings us back to its probable origin in the lived experience.

Religious aspects of the dream reports

In addition to similarities related to structure and content, a further unifying factor of most of the dream reports is that they seem to be illustrative of a common theme: the relationship between humans and gods. The divine aetiology of the general's dream is made more explicit in the *Iliad* than in the history books, as one would expect. Even so, the mythical prelude to the dream report that sets out the intervening gods' point of view in the epic (*Il.* 2,1–15) should perhaps be seen more as a feature of the genre than as an indication that the historians' dream reports represent a belief system that differed significantly from that of the epic. Let us turn to the evidence.

[69] It happens that Euripides also died in the same year as the Battle of Arginusae was fought.

Several of the dream reports involve mentions of sacrifices and, in Mus' case, *devotio*. Dreaming and dream-sharing could be followed by sacrifice (ἐθύοντο, 3; θυσία 4; *victimae*, 5a; *sacrificium*, *hostiae*, 5b), and once by libations (σπονδαί, 3). The purpose of these rituals seems to have been either to confirm the dream's prophecy by reading sacrificial victims (ἱερά, 2, 3, 5ab); thank the gods (3); fulfil demands received in the dream (4); and/or to avert divine wrath (5ab).[70] Eumenes' decision to deck his army with corn is also a cultic action, probably a symbolic dedication of the army to Demeter, and is related to his attempt to secure the goddess' favour in the battle (6). Pompey's dream, on the other hand, was preceded by sacrifices performed earlier during the night, which had failed, and the dream itself was a reflection of Caesar's *votum* of dedicating a temple to Venus, of which Pompey and his men were unaware (App. *B Civ.* 2,10,68–69).[71] The failed sacrifice would have added to the premonition that he felt after waking up.[72] Dreams could also lead to the establishment of a new cult; we are told that Aemilius Paulus, in accordance with oracles, set up on the spot of Valerius Conatus' disappearance an altar that afterward delivered oracles (9),[73] and Lucullus, it appears, took with him the statue of Autolycus (Strab. 12,3,11), perhaps intending to establish his cult in Italy.

The fact that several of the dreams occasioned cultic activities seems to indicate a belief that the gods might interest themselves in the wars of humans and either lend or withhold their assistance. The sacrificial act can be viewed as an attempt to establish reciprocal communication with the gods after a general

[70] Note also the mention of favourable omens following Germanicus' dream (*addicentibus auspiciis*, 20). Although his dream did not occasion sacrifice, the theme was present in the dream.

[71] Cf. Onomarchus' misinterpretation of his dream regarding a dedication to Apollo, in Diod. Sic. 16,33.

[72] Cf. Agesilaus' certainty that his expedition would be a failure after his sacrifice had failed (Plut. *Ages.* 6,6). On the functions of sacrifice before battle, see Jameson 1991; see esp. pp. 198–199; 206; 223, n. 19 on the importance of obtaining (sometimes after multiple attempts) favourable omens from sacrificial victims before proceeding with military actions. Jameson notes that propitiation of the gods as well as seeking omens is implicit in all rituals (199; 209), so the goals of a sacrifice occasioned by a dream may have been manifold, even if the authors focus on the most obvious reasons.

[73] The story is very doubtful, though; no Aemilius Paulus is known from the period (Smith – Smith 2005, 121).

had received a message from them, as it were, during sleep.[74] The divine origin of the dreams is clearest in the epiphanies of gods, but can be argued for the episode dreams as well: Xenophon ascertains that his dream is of divine origin; Lysimachus suspects that "the deity" might be pre-signifying (προσημαίνῃ τὸ θεῖον, 11) that Pyrrhus was not meant to conquer Sparta; and the words (spoken by Marius) that Sulla had heard in his dream, we are told, were fulfilled by a divinity (τὴν κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους φωνὴν ὁ δαίμων συνετέλει, 14). This also applies to the apparition in the two consuls' dream: although it was not recognized as a god, they nevertheless concluded that the dream was divinely inspired (συνέθεντο θεῖον εἶναι, 5d). Some of the episode dreams also involve elements that can (though need not always) be read as references to specific gods: thunderbolt strikes mark blessed locations and are most often associated with Zeus;[75] the theatre in Athens (in Thrasyllus' dream) was sacred to Dionysus, and Pompey's theatre to Venus; and the grain woven by Demeter into a wreath of victory in Eumenes' dream is symbolic of a victory granted by the goddess of agriculture.

The prevalence of the thematics of divine intervention in the "general's dream before battle" motif is noteworthy. Given that the sacrificial act recurs in the dream reports, and that most of them associate the dreams with gods, whether identified by name or not, it seems that an important – perhaps the primary – function of this motif is the introduction of a divine, prophetic agent into the historical narrative at a critical historical moment. This is, of course, probably a consequence of the belief that the gods might intervene, which was the primary reason why dreams were interpreted on military missions.

While there is no reason to doubt that the belief in the gods' ability and willingness to become involved in wars was ingrained in many Greeks' and Romans' worldviews, the historians' attitudes towards dreams exhibit some variation, and they might have handled the phenomenon of divine involvement in ways that reflected their own ideas and differed from other authors' conceptions. Xenophon (*An.* 3,1,12; 4,3,13) and Cassius Dio (72,23;

[74] For an overview of the interpretative model that sees sacrifice as part of a reciprocal system of communication between the gods and humans, see Graf 2002.

[75] While this might apply to Pyrrhus' dream, the lightning in Sulla's dream presages his assault on his enemies in Rome, and so the interpretation is quite the opposite. Besides, the deity in Sulla's dream is not Zeus but Ma-Bellona.

80,5), for example, report their own dreams, which they held to be divinely inspired, and they clearly believed that this kind of involvement could occur. On the other hand, although Plutarch reports several dozens of dreams, he is critical of superstition (δεισιδαιμονία) that might take the form of excessive faith in dreams (*Cor.* 24,1; *Eum.* 13,3; *Sert.* 11,3; *De Superst.* 168 F; *De Sera* 555 A). Of the historians who report dreams, only Polybius is clearly sceptical; apart from Scipio's dreams (10,2; 10,4–5; 10,11; 10,14), which he regards with suspicion, the only references to dream reports in his work seem to be an isolated mention of a (clearly non-prophetic) dream of Philip V (5,108) and his criticism of the earlier historian Timaeus of Tauromenium's habit of including too many dreams and portents in his work (12,24).[76]

Regardless of their own beliefs, the authors recognized the faith in dreams shared by many Greeks and Romans and used it in their character portrayal, sometimes quite effectively, as in Plutarch's portrayal of Sulla's state of mind during his attack on Rome (see pp. 150–151). Plutarch's description can be compared with Appian's account of Pompey's mood on the morning of the battle of Pharsalus:

> ἅπερ ὁ Πομπήιος οἷα πολέμων ἔμπειρος ἀπεστρέφετο καὶ νεμεσῶν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς ἐνεκαλύπτετο, κατεσιώπα δ᾽ ὅμως ὑπὸ ὄκνου καὶ δέους, ὥσπερ οὐ στρατηγῶν ἔτι, ἀλλὰ στρατηγούμενος καὶ πάντα πράσσων ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης παρὰ γνώμην. (App. *B Civ.* 2,10,69)
>
> "Given his military experience, Pompey rejected all this, and although justly angry at such conduct, kept his anger hidden, and in spite of his feelings said nothing out of hesitation and fear, as if he were no longer in command but under someone else's command, and forced to do everything against his will." (Trans. McGing 2020, 373)

[76] Polybius claims that Timaeus' work was "full of dreams, portents, incredible myths, and, in sum, of vulgar superstition and womanish talk about miracles" (ἐνυπνίων καὶ τεράτων καὶ μύθων ἀπιθάνων καὶ συλλήβδην δεισιδαιμονίας ἀγεννοῦς καὶ τερατείας γυναικώδους ἐστὶ πλήρης, 12,24). For differences in the Greek historians and biographers' attitudes towards epiphanies and dreams, see Lipka 2022, 137–164. For an analysis of the differences between Herodotus and Plutarch's approach to the divine factor in the Persian Wars, see Marincola 2015; esp. pp. 72–76 on Arimnestus' dream, of which Herodotus says nothing.

Both accounts give the impression that the general was overcome by a sentiment of inevitability, of not being in control of his own actions. Sulla, who had "surrendered to his anger the command over his actions" (τῷ θυμῷ παραδεδωκὼς τὴν τῶν πρασσομένων ἡγεμονίον), stormed the city and became unable to discriminate between friends and enemies, whereas Pompey remained silent (κατεσιώπα), "as if he were no longer in command but under someone else's command, and forced to do everything against his will" (ὥσπερ οὐ στρατηγῶν ἔτι, ἀλλὰ στρατηγούμενος καὶ πάντα πράσσων ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης παρὰ γνώμην). In Sulla's case, we are not sure if the loss of control was a result of his emotional state, or if we are meant to understand that he was in some kind of divinely inspired frenzy, such as the worshippers of Bellona might be during her ecstatic celebrations. Pompey's state of mind, on the contrary, is clearly symptomatic of his sense of fate – or divine direction – working through him despite his better understanding (γνώμη).[77] The consuls' unspoken reverence (*tacita religio*, 5a) following their dream is another example of such premonition.[78]

These instances seem to relate to the generals' faith in the function of the divine agent. Consequently, they are suggestive of not only their mental states but also their moral characters. The connection of morality and the moral character of dreamers to their dreams has only been explored in fairly limited fashion in the context of ancient dream reports, but it might be worth investigation in the future. It is perhaps most evident in descriptions of the haunted dreams of wrong-doers (cf. n. 65). Regarding the dreams of Alexander's successors recorded by Plutarch, Dámaris Romero-González (2019) has suggested that they are related to his description of their moral characters. For example, Alexander's unwillingness to assist Demetrius, revealed in the latter's dream, is "justified" by Demetrius' arrogance and claim of superiority compared to him.[79] While unfavourable dreams might, consequently, be symptomatic of faults in the dreamer's behaviour or moral disposition, favourable dreams could indicate that the dreamer was virtuous enough that the gods deigned to approach them directly. Auspicious dreams of generals, therefore, would have indicated to their

[77] The effect of a dream on the *gnome* is also mentioned in nro. 7 (cf. p. 144).

[78] We are also told that Pyrrhus "was not strong enough to defeat Fate" (οὐκ ἴσχυσε δὲ νικῆσαι τὴν πεπρωμένην) despite his evil premonition; though, in this case, due to pressure from his friends rather than a sense of inevitability.

[79] Romero-González 2019, 157–158.

armies not only that they had divine support on their side but also that they were commanded by an excellent leader.

In addition, the ways in which the generals handled divinely inspired dreams could reveal aspects of their character in the sphere of military leadership. A competent and successful leader hearkened to divine instruction, performed the necessary sacrifices to ensure victory, and was even prepared to sacrifice himself, should the gods demand. This too may be tied to the authors' attitudes; so while Appian suggests that being experienced in military matters (πολέμων ἔμπειρος, *B Civ.* 2,10,69) entailed being able to recognize favourable dreams and omens from unfavourable ones, for Polybius, Scipio's expertise in military leadership lay in his ability to take advantage of his soldiers' belief in that such miracles did happen.[80] Yet even though their attitudes towards divine interventions were thus markedly different, both sources can be read as evidence for the importance of interpreting dreams shortly before battles not only in ancient literature, but in the ancient culture of warfare.

Conclusion

To sum up, the "general's dream shortly before battle" motif recurs in the historiographical literature, starting with Xenophon and extending through the early Imperial era. Despite its use for various literary functions, the motif was likely based on a historical practice of scrutinizing generals' dreams before battles, which influenced and was in turn influenced by the historiographical tradition. Although the historians may have invented some dream reports and elaborated or exaggerated the historical importance of others for various ends, there is no reason to assume that generals' dreams were not closely observed before battles in real life. Further, in light of what is known about the religious aspects of ancient warfare, it is reasonable to conclude that the primary reason for this was the hope and fear that a god might actually pick a side.

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[80] Cf. Lipka's evaluation of Polybius' attitude towards Scipio's use of dream reports (2022, 155–156).

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Appendix: the dream reports

1. Plut. *Arist.* 11,5–8:

> Ἔνθα τῶν Πλαταιέων ὁ στρατηγὸς Ἀρίμνηστος ἔδοξε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ὑπὸ τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐπερωτώμενον αὐτόν, ὅ τι δὴ πράττειν δέδοκται τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, εἰπεῖν, "Αὔριον εἰς Ἐλευσῖνα τὴν στρατιὰν ἀπάξομεν, ὦ δέσποτα, καὶ διαμαχούμεθα τοῖς βαρβάροις ἐκεῖ κατὰ τὸ πυθόχρηστον." τὸν οὖν θεὸν φάναι διαμαρτάνειν αὐτοὺς τοῦ παντός· αὐτόθι γὰρ εἶναι περὶ τὴν Πλαταϊκὴν τὰ πυθόχρηστα καὶ ζητοῦντας ἀνευρήσειν. τούτων ἐναργῶς τῷ Ἀριμνήστῳ φανέντων ἐξεγρόμενος τάχιστα μετεπέμψατο τοὺς ἐμπειροτάτους καὶ πρεσβυτάτους τῶν πολιτῶν, μεθ' ὧν διαλεγόμενος καὶ συνδιαπορῶν εὗρεν, ὅτι τῶν Ὑσιῶν πλησίον ὑπὸ τὸν Κιθαιρῶνα ναός ἐστιν ἀρχαῖος πάνυ Δήμητρος Ἐλευσινίας καὶ Κόρης προσαγορευόμενος. εὐθὺς οὖν παραλαβὼν τὸν Ἀριστείδην ἦγεν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, εὐφυέστατον ὄντα παρατάξαι φάλαγγα πεζικὴν ἱπποκρατουμένοις, (…). ὅπως δὲ μηδὲν ἐλλιπὲς ἔχῃ πρὸς τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς νίκης ὁ χρησμός, ἔδοξε τοῖς Πλαταιεῦσιν, Ἀριμνήστου γνώμην εἰπόντος, ἀνελεῖν τὰ πρὸς τὴν Ἀττικὴν ὅρια τῆς Πλαταιΐδος καὶ τὴν χώραν ἐπιδοῦναι τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐν οἰκείᾳ κατὰ τὸν χρησμὸν ἐναγωνίσασθαι.
>
> "At this time the general of the Plataeans, Arimnestus, had a dream in which he thought he was accosted by Zeus the Saviour and asked what the Hellenes had decided to do, and replied: 'On the morrow, my Lord, we are going to lead our army back to Eleusis, and fight out our issue with the Barbarians there, in accordance with the Pythian oracle.' Then the god said they were entirely in error, for the Pythian oracle's places were there in the neighbourhood of Plataea, and if they sought them they would surely find them. All this was made so vivid to Arimnestus that as soon as he awoke he summoned the oldest and most experienced of his fellow-citizens. By conference and investigation with these he discoverd that near Hysiae, at the foot of mount Cithaeron, there was a very ancient temple bearing the names of Eleusinian Demeter and Cora. Straightway then he took Aristides and led him to the spot. They found that it was

naturally very well suited to the array of infantry against a force that was superior in cavalry, (…). And besides, that the oracle might leave no rift in the hope of victory, the Plataeans voted, on motion of Arimnestus, to remove the boundaries of Plataea on the side toward Attica, and to give this territory to the Athenians, that so they might contend in defence of Hellas on their own soil, in accordance with the oracle." (Trans. Perrin 1914, 247–249)

2. Diod. 13,97,6–7:

τῶν δ᾽ Ἀθηναίων ὁ στρατηγὸς Θρασύβουλος, ὃς ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν, εἶδε κατὰ τὴν νύκτα τοιαύτην ὄψιν· ἔδοξεν Ἀθήνησι τοῦ θεάτρου πλήθοντος αὐτός τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων στρατηγῶν ἓξ ὑποκρίνεσθαι τραγῳδίαν Εὐριπίδου Φοινίσσας· τῶν δ᾽ ἀντιπάλων ὑποκρινομένων τὰς Ἱκέτιδας δόξαι τὴν Καδμείαν νίκην αὐτοῖς περιγενέσθαι, καὶ πάντας ἀποθανεῖν μιμουμένους τὰ πράγματα τῶν ἐπὶ τὰς Θήβας στρατευσάντων. ἀκούσας δ᾽ ὁ μάντις ταῦτα διεσάφει τοὺς ἑπτὰ τῶν στρατηγῶν ἀναιρεθήσεσθαι. τῶν δ᾽ ἱερῶν φερόντων νίκην, οἱ στρατηγοὶ περὶ μὲν τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀπωλείας ἐκώλυον ἑτέροις ἀπαγγέλλειν, περὶ δὲ τῆς ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς νίκης ἀνήγγειλαν καθ᾽ ὅλην τὴν δύναμιν.

"And in the case of the Athenians Thrasybulus[81] their general, who held the supreme command on that day, saw in the night the following vision. He dreamed that he was in Athens and the theatre was crowded, and that he and six of the other generals were playing the *Phoenician Women* of Euripides, while their competitors were performing the *Suppliants*; and that it resulted in a 'Cadmean victory' for them and they all died, just as did those who waged the campaign against Thebes. When the seer heard this, he disclosed that seven of the generals would be slain. Since the omens revealed victory, the generals forbade any word going out to the others about their own death but they passed the news of the victory disclosed by the omens throughout the whole army." (Trans. Oldfather 1950, 399)

[81] I.e., Thrasyllus (Kagan 1987, 342).

3. Xen. *An.* 4,3,8–14:

> Ταύτην μὲν οὖν τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτα ἔμειναν ἐν πολλῇ ἀπορίᾳ ὄντες. Ξενοφῶν δὲ ὄναρ εἶδεν· ἔδοξεν ἐν πέδαις δεδέσθαι, αὗται δὲ αὐτῷ αὐτόμαται περιρρυῆναι, ὥστε λυθῆναι καὶ διαβαίνειν ὁπόσον ἐβούλετο. ἐπεὶ δὲ ὄρθρος ἦν, ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸν Χειρίσοφον καὶ λέγει ὅτι ἐλπίδας ἔχει καλῶς ἔσεσθαι, καὶ διηγεῖται αὐτῷ τὸ ὄναρ. ὁ δὲ ἥδετό τε καὶ ὡς τάχιστα ἕως ὑπέφαινεν ἐθύοντο πάντες παρόντες οἱ στρατηγοί. καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ καλὰ ἦν εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τοῦ πρώτου, (…). Ἀριστῶντι δὲ τῷ Ξενοφῶντι προστρέχετον δύο νεανίσκω· (…) ἔλεγον ὅτι τυγχάνοιεν φρύγανα συλλέγοντες (…), κἄπειτα κατίδοιεν ἐν τῷ πέραν ἐν πέτραις καθηκούσαις ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν ποταμὸν γέροντά τε καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ παιδίσκας (…). ἰδοῦσι δὲ σφίσι δόξαι ἀσφαλὲς εἶναι διαβῆναι· οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῖς πολεμίοις ἱππεῦσι προσβατὸν εἶναι κατὰ τοῦτο. (…) Εὐθὺς οὖν Ξενοφῶν αὐτός τε ἔσπενδε καὶ τοῖς νεανίσκοις ἐγχεῖν ἐκέλευε καὶ εὔχεσθαι τοῖς φήνασι θεοῖς τά τε ὀνείρατα καὶ τὸν πόρον καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἀγαθὰ ἐπιτελέσαι. σπείσας δ᾽ εὐθὺς ἦγε τοὺς νεανίσκους παρὰ τὸν Χειρίσοφον, καὶ διηγοῦνται ταὐτά. ἀκούσας δὲ καὶ ὁ Χειρίσοφος σπονδὰς ἐποίει.

> "That day and night, accordingly, they remained there, in great perplexity. But Xenophon had a dream; he thought that he was bound in fetters, but that the fetters fell off from him of their own accord, so that he was released and could take as long steps as he pleased. When dawn came, he went to Cheirisophus, told him he had hopes that all would be well, and related to him his dream. Cheirisophus was pleased, and as soon as day began to break, all the generals were at hand and proceeded to offer sacrifices. And with the very first victim the omens were favourable. (…) While Xenophon was breakfasting, two young men came running up to him; (…) the young men reported that they had happened to be gathering dry sticks (…), and that while so occupied they had descried across the river, among some rocks that reached down to the very edge of the river, an old man and a woman and some little girls (…). When they saw this proceeding, they said, they made up their minds that it was safe for them to cross, for this was a place that was not accessible to the enemy's cavalry. (…) Upon hearing this report Xenophon immediately proceeded to pour

a libation himself, and directed his attendants to fill a cup for the young men and to pray to the gods who had revealed the dream and the ford, to bring to fulfilment the other blessings also. The libation accomplished, he at once led the young men to Cheirisophus, and they repeated their story to him. And upon hearing it Cheirisophus also made libation." (Trans. Brownson 2001, 315–317)

4. Plut. *Pel.* 21,1–22,2:

Ὁ δὲ Πελοπίδας ἐν τῷ στρατοπέδῳ κατακοιμηθεὶς ἔδοξε τάς τε παῖδας ὁρᾶν περὶ τὰ μνήματα θρηνούσας καὶ καταρωμένας τοῖς Σπαρτιάταις, τόν τε Σκέδασον κελεύοντα ταῖς κόραις σφαγιάσαι παρθένον ξανθήν, εἰ βούλοιτο τῶν πολεμίων ἐπικρατῆσαι. δεινοῦ δὲ καὶ παρανόμου τοῦ προστάγματος αὐτῷ φανέντος ἐξαναστὰς ἐκοινοῦτο τοῖς τε μάντεσι καὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν. ὧν οἱ μὲν οὐκ εἴων παραμελεῖν οὐδ᾽ ἀπειθεῖν, τῶν μὲν παλαιῶν προφέροντες Μενοικέα τὸν Κρέοντος καὶ Μακαρίαν τὴν Ἡρακλέους, τῶν δ᾽ ὕστερον Φερεκύδην τε τὸν σοφὸν ὑπὸ Λακεδαιμονίων ἀναιρεθέντα καὶ τὴν δορὰν αὐτοῦ κατά τι λόγιον ὑπὸ τῶν βασιλέων φρουρουμένην, Λεωνίδαν τε τῷ χρησμῷ τρόπον τινὰ προθυσάμενον ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἔτι δὲ τοὺς ὑπὸ Θεμιστοκλέους σφαγιασθέντας ὠμηστῇ Διονύσῳ πρὸ τῆς ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ναυμαχίας· ἐκείνοις γὰρ ἐπιμαρτυρῆσαι τὰ κατορθώματα· τοῦτο δέ, ὡς Ἀγησίλαον ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν Ἀγαμέμνονι τόπων ἐπὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς στρατευόμενον πολεμίους ᾔτησε μὲν ἡ θεὸς τὴν θυγατέρα σφάγιον καὶ ταύτην εἶδε τὴν ὄψιν ἐν Αὐλίδι κοιμώμενος, ὁ δ᾽ οὐκ ἔδωκεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἀπομαλθακωθεὶς κατέλυσε τὴν στρατείαν ἄδοξον καὶ ἀτελῆ γενομένην. οἱ δὲ τοὐναντίον ἀπηγόρευον, ὡς οὐδενὶ τῶν κρειττόνων καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἀρεστὴν οὖσαν οὕτω βάρβαρον καὶ παράνομον θυσίαν· οὐ γὰρ τοὺς Τυφῶνας ἐκείνους οὐδὲ τοὺς Γίγαντας ἄρχειν, ἀλλὰ τὸν πάντων πατέρα θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων· (…). Ἐν τοιούτοις οὖν διαλόγοις τῶν πρώτων ὄντων, καὶ μάλιστα τοῦ Πελοπίδου διαποροῦντος, ἵππων ἐξ ἀγέλης πῶλος ἀποφυγοῦσα καὶ φερομένη διὰ τῶν ὅπλων, ὡς ἦν θέουσα κατ᾽ αὐτοὺς ἐκείνους, ἐπέστη· καὶ τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις θέαν παρεῖχεν ἥ τε χρόα στίλβουσα τῆς χαίτης πυρσότατον (…), Θεόκριτος δὲ ὁ μάντις συμφρονήσας ἀνεβόησε πρὸς τὸν Πελοπίδαν· "Ηκει σοι τὸ ἱερεῖον, ὦ δαιμόνιε, καὶ παρθένον ἄλλην μὴ περιμένωμεν,

ἀλλὰ χρῶ δεξάμενος ἣν ὁ θεὸς δίδωσιν." ἐκ τούτου λαβόντες τὴν ἵππον ἐπὶ τοὺς τάφους ἦγον τῶν παρθένων, καὶ κατευξάμενοι καὶ καταστέψαντες ἐνέτεμον αὐτοί τε χαίροντες καὶ λόγον εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον περὶ τῆς ὄψεως τοῦ Πελοπίδου καὶ τῆς θυσίας διδόντες.

"After Pelopidas had lain down to sleep in the camp, he thought he saw these maidens weeping at their tombs, as they invoked curses upon the Spartans, and Scedasus bidding him sacrifice to his daughters a virgin with auburn hair, if he wished to win the victory over his enemies. The injunction seemed a lawless and dreadful one to him, but he rose up and made it known to the seers and the commanders. Some of these would not hear of the injunction being neglected or disobeyed, adducing as examples of such sacrifice among the ancients, Menoeceus, son of Creon, Macaria, daughter of Heracles; and, in later times, Pherecydes the wise man, who was put to death by the Lacedaemonians, and whose skin was preserved by their kings, in accordance with some oracle; and Leonidas, who, in obedience to the oracle, sacrificed himself, as it were, to save Greece; and, still further, the youths who were sacrificed by Themistocles to Dionysus Carnivorous before the sea fight at Salamis; for the successes which followed these sacrifices proved them acceptable to the gods. Moreover, when Agesilaüs, who was setting out on an expedition from the same place as Agamemnon did, and against the same enemies, was asked by the goddess for his daughter in sacrifice, and had this vision as he lay asleep at Aulis, he was too tender-hearted to give her, and thereby brought his expedition to an unsuccessful and inglorious ending. Others, on the contrary, argued against it, declaring that such a lawless and barbarous sacrifice was not acceptable to any one of the superior beings above us, for it was not the fabled typhons and giants who governed the world, but the father of all gods and men; (…). While, then, the chief men were thus disputing, and while Pelopidas in particular was in perplexity, a filly broke away from the herd of horses and sped through the camp, and when she came to the very place of their conference, stood still. The rest only admired the colour of her glossy mane, which was fiery red, (…); but Theocritus the seer, after taking thought, cried out to Pelopidas: 'Thy sacrificial victim is come, good man; so let us not wait for any other virgin, but do thou accept and use the one which Heaven offers thee.' So

they took the mare and led her to the tombs of the maidens, upon which, after decking her with garlands and consecrating her with prayers, they sacrificed her, rejoicing themselves, and publishing through the camp an account of the vision of Pelopidas and of the sacrifice." (Trans. Perrin 1917, 391–395)

5a. Livy 8,6,8–13:

Consensit et senatus bellum; consulesque duobus scriptis exercitibus per Marsos Paelignosque profecti adiuncto Samnitium exercitu ad Capuam, quo iam Latini sociique convenerant, castra locant. Ibi in quiete utrique consuli eadem dicitur visa species viri maioris quam pro humano habitu augustiorisque, dicentis ex una acie imperatorem, ex altera exercitum Deis Manibus Matrique Terrae deberi; utrius exercitus imperator legiones hostium superque eas se devovisset, eius populi partisque victoriam fore. Hos ubi nocturnos visus inter se consules contulerunt, placuit averruncandae deum irae victimas caedi; simul ut, si extis eadem quae in somnio visa fuerant portenderentur, alter uter consulum fata impleret. Ubi responsa haruspicum insidenti iam animo tacitae religioni congruerunt, tum adhibitis legatis tribunisque et imperiis deum propalam expositis, ne mors voluntaria consulis exercitum in acie terreret, comparant inter se ut ab utra parte cedere Romanus exercitus coepisset, inde se consul devoveret pro populo Romano Quiritibusque.

"The senate also agreed on war; and the consuls, enrolling two armies, marched out through the country of the Marsi and Paeligni, and having added to their forces the army of the Samnites, went into camp near Capua, where the Latins and their allies had already assembled. There in the stillness of the night both consuls are said to have been visited by the same apparition, a man of greater than human stature and more majestic, who declared that the commander of one side, and the army of the other, must be offered up to the Manes and to Mother Earth; and that in whichever host the general should devote to death the enemy's legions, and himself with them, that nation and that side would have the victory. When the consuls had compared these visions of the night, they resolved

that victims should be slain to turn away the wrath of Heaven; and, at the same time, that if the warning of the entrails should coincide with what they had seen in their dream, one or other of the consuls should fulfil the decrees of fate. The report of the soothsayers agreed with the secret conviction which had already found lodgment in their breasts; whereupon they sent for their lieutenants and the tribunes, and having openly declared the pleasure of the gods, that so the consul's voluntary death might not terrify the soldiers in the fray, they agreed with one another that on whichever flank the Roman army should begin to yield, there the consul should devote himself in behalf of the Roman People and Quirites." (Trans. Foster 1926, 21–23)

5b. Val. Max. 1,7,3:

Illud etiam somnium et magnae admirationis et clari exitus, quod eadem nocte duo consules P. Decius Mus et T. Manlius Torquatus Latino bello gravi ac periculoso non procul a Vesuvii montis radicibus positis castris viderunt: utrique enim quaedam per quietem species praedixit ex altera acie imperatorem, ex altera exercitum dis Manibus Matrique Terrae deberi: utrius autem dux copias hostium superque eas sese ipsum devovisset, victricem abituram. id luce proxima consulibus sacrificio vel expiaturis, si posset averti, vel, si certum deorum etiam monitu visum foret, exsecuturis hostiarum exta somnio congruerunt, convenitque inter eos cuius cornu prius laborare coepisset, ut is capite suo fata patriae lueret. quae neutro reformidante Decium depoposcerunt.

"Another dream also of great marvel and clear outcome: two Consuls, P. Decius Mus and T. Manlius Torquatus, had it on the same night in the grave and dangerous Latin War at their camp pitched not far from the roots of Mount Vesuvius. For to both an apparition in sleep predicted that a general on one side and an army on the other were due to the Manes and Mother Earth; and the side whose commander devoted the enemy forces and over and above them himself would come off victorious. Next morning the Consuls made sacrifice, intending either to expiate the prophecy if it were possible to avoid it, or to carry it out, if a warning from

the gods too confirmed the vision. The victims' entrails agreeing with the dream, they settled between them that whosever wing came into trouble first, he should discharge the country's fates with his own life. Neither flinched, but the fates demanded Decius." (Trans. Shackleton Bailey 2000, 85)

5c. [Plut.] *Par. min.* 310 A–B (= [Aristides], *FHG* IV, fr. 18):

Πόπλιος Δέκιος Ῥωμαῖος πρὸς Ἀλβανοὺς πολεμῶν ὄναρ εἶδεν, ἐὰν ἀποθάνῃ, ῥώμην προσποιήσειν Ῥωμαίοις. ἐλθὼν εἰς μέσους καὶ πολλοὺς φονεύσας ἀνῃρέθη. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ Δέκιος ἐν τῷ πρὸς Γάλλους πολέμῳ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους διέσωσεν· ὡς Ἀριστείδης Μιλήσιος.

"When Publius Decius, a Roman, was warring against the Albans, he saw in a dream that, if he should die, his death would bring strength to the Romans. He went into the thick of the battle, slew many, and was himself slain. In like manner did his son Decius also save the Romans in the war against the Gauls. So Aristeides the Milesian." (Trans. Babbitt 1936, 285)

5d. Cass. Dio 7, fr. Zonar. 7,26:

Εἶτα ὄναρ ἀμφοῖν τοῖς ὑπάτοις ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ νυκτὶ ὁμοίως φανὲν ἔδοξε λέγειν τῶν ἐναντίων κρατήσειν, ἂν ὁ ἕτερος τῶν ὑπάτων ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδῷ. μεθ᾽ ἡμέραν οὖν ἀλλήλοις τὸ ὄναρ διηγησάμενοι συνέθεντο θεῖον εἶναι, καὶ πεισθῆναι δεῖν αὐτῷ ὡμολόγησαν. ἠμφισβήτησαν δὲ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, οὐχ ὃς ἄν σωθείη, ἀλλ᾽ ὃς ἂν μᾶλλον ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδῷ· καὶ παρὰ τοῖς πρώτοις τοῦ στρατοπέδου ἐδικαιολογήσαντο. καὶ τέλος ἤρεσε σφίσι τὸν μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ δεξιοῦ κέρως, τὸν δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ λαιοῦ παρατάξασθαι, καὶ ὁπότερον ἂν ἐκείνων ἐλαττωθῇ, τὸν ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ τεταγμένον ἀποθανεῖν.

"Soon after, a dream that appeared similarly to both consuls the same night seemed to tell them that they should overcome the enemy, if one of the consuls would devote himself. Discussing the dream together in the daytime, they decided that it was of divine origin, and agreed that it must be obeyed. And they disputed with each other, not as to which should be

saved, but as to which of them preferably should devote himself; and they even presented their arguments before the foremost men in the camp. Finally they settled it that one should station himself on the right wing and the other on the left, and that whichever of these two divisions should be defeated, the consul stationed there should give up his life." (Trans. Cary 1914, 243)

6. Plut. *Eum.* 6,4–7:

νυκτὸς δὲ ἀναζεῦξαι βουλόμενος, εἶτα καταδαρθὼν ὄψιν εἶδεν ἀλλόκοτον. ἐδόκει γὰρ ὁρᾶν Ἀλεξάνδρους δύο παρασκευαζομένους ἀλλήλοις μάχεσθαι, μιᾶς ἑκάτερον ἡγούμενον φάλαγγος· εἶτα τῷ μὲν τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, τῷ δὲ τὴν Δήμητραν βοηθοῦσαν ἐλθεῖν, γενομένου δὲ ἀγῶνος ἰσχυροῦ κρατηθῆναι τὸν μετὰ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, τῷ δὲ νικῶντι σταχύων δρεπομένην τὴν Δήμητραν συμπλέκειν στέφανον. Αὐτόθεν μὲν οὖν τὴν ὄψιν εἴκαζεν εἶναι πρὸς αὐτοῦ, μαχομένου περὶ γῆς ἀρίστης καὶ τότε πολὺν καὶ καλὸν ἐχούσης ἐν κάλυκι στάχυν· ἅπασα γὰρ κατέσπαρτο καὶ παρεῖχεν εἰρήνῃ πρέπουσαν ὄψιν, ἀμφιλαφῶς τῶν πεδίων κομώντων· μᾶλλον δὲ ἐπερρώσθη πυθόμενος σύνθημα τοῖς πολεμίοις Ἀθηνᾶν καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον εἶναι. Δήμητραν δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐδίδου σύνθημα καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον, ἀναδεῖσθαί τε πάντας ἐκέλευε καὶ καταστέφειν τὰ ὅπλα τῶν σταχύων λαμβάνοντας. ὁρμήσας δὲ πολλάκις ἐξαγορεῦσαι καὶ φράσαι τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν ἡγεμόσι καὶ στρατηγοῖς πρὸς ὃν ἔμελλεν ὁ ἀγὼν ἔσεσθαι, καὶ μὴ μόνος ἐν αὑτῷ θέμενος ἀποκρύψαι καὶ κατασχεῖν ἀπόρρητον οὕτως ἀναγκαῖον, ὅμως ἐνέμεινε τοῖς λογισμοῖς καὶ διεπίστευσε τῇ γνώμῃ τὸν κίνδυνον.

"One night he was planning to decamp and then fell asleep and had a strange vision. He dreamed, namely, that he saw two Alexanders ready to give each other battle, each at the head of a phalanx; then Athena came to help the one, and Demeter the other, and after a fierce struggle the one who had Athena for a helper was beaten, and Demeter, culling ears of grain, wove them into a wreath for the victor. At once, then, he conjectured that the vision was in his favour, since he was fighting for a country that was most fertile and had at that time an abundance of fine young grain in the ear; for the land had everywhere been sown and bespoke a time

of peace, now that its plains were covered with a luxuriant growth; and he was all the more strengthened in his belief when he learned that the enemy's watchword was 'Athena and Alexander.' Accordingly, he too gave out a watchword, namely, 'Demeter and Alexander,' and ordered all his men to crown themselves and wreathe their arms with ears of grain. But though he often felt an impulse to speak out and tell his principal officers who it was against whom their struggle was to be, and not to keep hidden away in his own breast alone a secret so important, nevertheless he abode by his first resolution and made his judgment surety for the peril." (Trans. Perrin 1919b, 95–97)

7. Plut. *Demetr.* 29,1–2:

Τότε μέντοι καὶ σημεῖα μοχθηρὰ κατεδουλοῦτο τὴν γνώμην αὐτῶν. Δημήτριος μὲν γὰρ ἔδοξε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους Ἀλέξανδρον ὡπλισμένον λαμπρῶς ἐρωτᾶν ὁποῖόν τι σύνθημα διδόναι πρὸς τὴν μάχην μέλλουσιν· αὐτοῦ δὲ φήσαντος, "Δία καὶ Νίκην" "Ἄπειμι τοίνυν," φάναι, "πρὸς τοὺς ἐναντίους· ἐκεῖνοι γάρ με παραλαμβάνουσιν." Ἀντίγονος δὲ παρατattομένης ἤδη τῆς φάλαγγος ἐξιὼν προσέπταισεν, ὥστε πεσεῖν ὅλως ἐπὶ στόμα καὶ διατεθῆναι χαλεπῶς· ἀναστὰς δὲ καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἀνατείνας πρὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἠτήσατο νίκην παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἢ θάνατον ἀναίσθητον πρὸ τῆς ἥττης.

"At this time, moreover, bad omens also subdued their spirits. For Demetrius dreamed that Alexander, in brilliant array of armour, asked him what watchword they were going to give for the battle; and when he replied, "Zeus and Victory," Alexander said: "Then I will go away and join your adversaries; they surely will receive me." Moreover, Antigonus, when his phalanx was already forming and he was leaving his tent, stumbled and fell prone upon his face, injuring himself severely; but he rose to his feet, and stretching out his hands towards heaven prayed that the gods would grant him victory, or a painless death before his defeat." (Trans. Perrin 1920, 69–71)

8. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 11,1–3:

> Ταῦτα πρὸς τὸν Πύρρον οἱ βασιλεῖς γράφοντες ἅμα καὶ δι' ἑαυτῶν ἔτι μέλλοντα καὶ παρασκευαζόμενον τὸν Δημήτριον ἐκίνουν. Πτολεμαῖος μὲν γὰρ ἐπιπλεύσας μεγάλῳ στόλῳ τὰς Ἑλληνίδας ἀφίστη πόλεις, Λυσίμαχος δὲ τὴν ἄνω Μακεδονίαν ἐκ Θρᾴκης ἐμβαλὼν ἐπόρθει. Πύρρος δὲ τούτοις ἅμα συνεξαναστὰς ἐπὶ Βέροιαν ἤλαυνε, προσδοκῶν, ὅπερ συνέβη, Δημήτριον ὑπαντιάζοντα Λυσιμάχῳ τὴν κάτω χώραν ἀπολείψειν ἔρημον. ἐκείνης δὲ τῆς νυκτὸς ἔδοξε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ὑπὸ Ἀλεξάνδρου καλεῖσθαι τοῦ μεγάλου, καὶ παραγενόμενος κλινήρη μὲν αὐτὸν ἰδεῖν, λόγων δὲ χρηστῶν τυχεῖν καὶ φιλοφροσύνης ἐπαγγελλομένου προθύμως βοηθήσειν. αὐτοῦ δὲ τολμήσαντος εἰπεῖν, "Καὶ πῶς ἄν, ὦ βασιλεῦ, νοσῶν δυνατὸς εἶης ἐμοὶ βοηθεῖν;" αὐτῷ φάναι τῷ ὀνόματι, καὶ περιβάντα Νισαῖον ἵππον ἡγεῖσθαι. Ταύτην ἰδὼν τὴν ὄψιν ἐπερρώσθη· τάχει δὲ χρησάμενος καὶ διαδραμὼν τὰ μεταξὺ καταλαμβάνει τὴν Βέροιαν· καὶ τὸ πλεῖστον αὐτόθι τῆς στρατιᾶς ἱδρύσας τὰ λοιπὰ προσήγετο διὰ τῶν στρατηγῶν.
>
> "Such letters the kings kept sending to Pyrrhus, and at the same time on their own part they assailed Demetrius while he was still waiting to complete his preparations. Ptolemy sailed up with a great fleet and tried to bring the Greek cities to revolt, while Lysimachus invaded upper Macedonia from Thrace and ravaged the country. So Pyrrhus, taking the field at the same time with these, marched against Beroea, expecting, as proved to be the case, that Demetrius would go to confront Lysimachus, and thus leave the lower country unprotected. That night Pyrrhus dreamed that he was called by Alexander the Great, and that when he answered the call he found the king lying on a couch, but met with kindly speech and friendly treatment from him, and received a promise of his ready aid and help. 'And how, O King,' Pyrrhus ventured to ask, 'when thou art sick, canst thou give me aid and help?' 'My name itself will give it,' said the king, and mounting a Nisaean horse he led the way. This vision gave Pyrrhus great assurance, and leading his army with all speed through the intervening districts he took possession of Beroea; then, stationing the greater part of his forces there, he proceeded to subdue the rest of the country through his generals." (Trans. Perrin 1920, 375)

9. [Plut.] *Par. min.* 307 B (= Critolaus, *FHG* IV, fr. 1):

> Ῥωμαίων πρὸς Πύρρον Ἠπειρώτην πολεμούντων Αἰμίλιος Παῦλος χρησμὸν ἔλαβε νικῆσαι, βωμὸν ἐὰν ποιήσῃ, ἔνθα ἄν ἴδῃ χάσματι κρυπτόμενον ἄνδρα τῶν ἐπισήμων μετὰ ἅρματος. μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας Οὐαλέριος Κονᾶτος κατ᾽ ὄναρ ἰδὼν ἀναλαβεῖν ἱερέως κόσμον (καὶ γὰρ ἦν μαντικῆς ἔμπειρος), στρατηγήσας καὶ πολλοὺς φονεύσας ὑπὸ γῆς κατεπόθη. ὁ Αἰμίλιος δὲ βωμὸν ἱδρύσας ἐνίκησε καὶ ἑκατὸν ἐξήκοντα πυργοφόρους ἐλέφαντας εἰς Ῥώμην κατέπεμψεν. ὁ δὲ βωμὸς μαντεύεται κατ᾽ ἐκεῖνον τὸν καιρόν, καθ᾽ ὃν ἐνικήθη Πύρρος· ὡς ἱστορεῖ Κριτόλαος ἐν τρίτῃ Ἠπειρωτικῶν.
>
> "When the Romans were fighting against Pyrrhus of Epeirus, Aemilius Paulus received an oracle that he should be victorious if he would build an altar where he should see a man of the nobles with his chariot swallowed up in an abyss. Three days later Valerius Conatus in a dream saw a vision which commanded him to don his priestly raiment (he was, in fact, an expert augur). When he had led forth his men and slain many of the enemy, he was swallowed up by the earth. Aemilius built an altar, gained a victory, and sent back an hundred and sixty turreted elephants to Rome. The altar delivers oracles at that time of year when Pyrrhus was vanquished. This Critolaüs relates in the third book of his *Epeirote History*." (Trans. Babbitt 1936, 267–269)

10. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 20,12:

> Ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἐν ᾗ τὴν στρατιὰν ἀπάξειν ὁ Πύρρος ἔμελλεν ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τῷ Ῥωμαίων ἐπιθησόμενος χάρακι λάθρα ἔδοξε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ἐκπεσεῖν αὐτοῦ τοὺς πλείους ὀδόντας καὶ πλῆθος αἵματος ἐκ τοῦ στόματος φέρεσθαι. ταραχθεὶς δὲ διὰ τὴν ὄψιν καὶ μεγάλην ἔσεσθαι συμφορὰν μαντευόμενος (ἤδη γὰρ αὐτῷ καὶ πρότερον τοιαύτην ὄψιν ἐνυπνίου θεασαμένῳ δεινή τις συνέβη δυσποτμία) ἐβούλετο μὲν ἐπισχεῖν τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην, οὐκ ἴσχυσε δὲ νικῆσαι τὴν πεπρωμένην, ἐναντιουμένων τῶν φίλων πρὸς τὴν ἀναβολὴν καὶ μὴ μεθεῖναι τὸν καιρὸν ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν ἀξιούντων. Ἀναβάντων δὲ τῶν σὺν τῷ Πύρρῳ μετὰ τῶν ἐλεφάντων

αἴσθησιν οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι λαβόντες σκυμνίον ἐλέφαντος τιτρώσκουσιν, ὃ πολλὴν ἀκοσμίαν τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐνεποίησε καὶ φυγήν· οἱ δὲ Ῥωμαῖοι δύο μὲν ἐλέφαντας ἀποκτείνουσιν, ὀκτὼ δὲ κατακλείσαντες εἰς χωρίον ἀνέξοδον παραδόντων τῶν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς Ἰνδῶν ζῶντας παραλαμβάνουσι, τῶν δὲ στρατιωτῶν πολὺν φόνον ἐργάζονται.

"During the night in which Pyrrhus was intending to lead his army against the hill to attack the Roman camp secretly it seemed to him in his dreams that most of his teeth fell out and a quantity of blood poured from his mouth. Disturbed by this vision and divining that some great misfortune would ensue, since he had already on an earlier occasion beheld a similar vision in a dream and some dire disaster had followed, he wished to hold back that day, but was not strong enough to defeat Fate; for his friends opposed the delay and demanded that he should not let the favourable opportunity slip from his grasp. When Pyrrhus and those with him had ascended along with the elephants, and the Romans became aware of it, they wounded an elephant cub, which caused great confusion and flight among the Greeks. The Romans killed two elephants, and hemming eight others in a place that had no outlet, took them alive when the Indian mahouts surrendered them; and they wrought great slaughter among the soldiers." (Trans. Cary 1950, 421–423)

11. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 29,1–2:

Νυκτὸς δὲ ἡ μάχη διεκρίθη· καὶ κοιμώμενος ὁ Πύρρος ὄψιν εἶδε τοιαύτην. ἐδόκει βάλλεσθαι κεραυνοῖς ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ τὴν Λακεδαίμονα καὶ φλέγεσθαι πᾶσαν, αὐτὸν δὲ χαίρειν. ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς χαρᾶς ἐξεγρόμενος τούς τε ἡγεμόνας ἐκέλευεν ἐν παρασκευῇ τὸν στρατὸν ἔχειν, καὶ τοῖς φίλοις διηγεῖτο τὸν ὄνειρον ὡς ληψόμενος κατὰ κράτος τὴν πόλιν. οἱ μὲν οὖν ἄλλοι θαυμασίως ἐπείθοντο, Λυσιμάχῳ δὲ οὐκ ἤρεσκεν ἡ ὄψις, ἀλλ᾽ ἔφη δεδιέναι μή, καθάπερ τὰ βαλλόμενα τοῖς κεραυνοῖς ἀνέμβατα μένει χωρία, καὶ τῷ Πύρρῳ προσημαίνῃ τὸ θεῖον ἀνείσοδον ἔσεσθαι τὴν πόλιν. ὁ δὲ Πύρρος εἰπὼν ὅτι ταῦτα μέν ἐστι πυλαϊκῆς ὀχλαγωγίας καὶ ἀσοφίαν ἔχοντα πολλήν, ἐκεῖνο δὲ δεῖ τὰ ὅπλα διὰ χειρῶν ἔχοντας ὑποβάλλειν ἑαυτοῖς,

Εἷς οἰωνὸς ἄριστος ἀμύνεσθαι περὶ Πύρρου,
ἐξανέστη καὶ προσῆγεν ἅμ᾽ ἡμέρᾳ τὸν στρατόν.

"Night put an end to the battle; and Pyrrhus, as he slept, had the following vision. He dreamed that Sparta was smitten with thunderbolts from his hand and was all ablaze, and that he was filled with joy. His joy waked him from sleep, and he commanded his officers to get the army ready for action, and narrated his dream to his friends, convinced that he was going to take the city by storm. Most of them, then, were fully persuaded that he was right, but Lysimachus was not pleased with the vision; he said he was afraid lest, as places smitten by thunderbolts are kept free from the tread of men, the Deity might be indicating in advance to Pyrrhus also that the city was not to be entered by him. But Pyrrhus declared that this was nonsense intended for the crowd, and great folly, and calling upon his hearers to take their arms in their hands and act upon the belief that 'One is the best of all omens, to fight in defence of Pyrrhus,' rose up, and at day-break led forth his army." (Trans. Perrin 1920, 443)

12. Polyb. 10,11,5–8:

Πλὴν ὅ γε Πόπλιος, συνάψαντος καὶ τοῦ στόλου πρὸς τὸν δέοντα καιρόν, ἐπεβάλετο συναθροίσας τὰ πλήθη παρακαλεῖν, οὐχ ἑτέροις τισὶ χρώμενος ἀπολογισμοῖς, ἀλλ᾽ οἷς ἐτύγχανε πεπεικὼς αὐτόν, (…). ἀποδείξας δὲ δυνατὴν οὖσαν τὴν ἐπιβολήν, καὶ συγκεφαλαιωσάμενος τὴν ἐκ τοῦ κατορθώματος ἐλάττωσιν <τῶν ὑπεναντίων, αὔξησιν> δὲ τῶν σφετέρων πραγμάτων, λοιπὸν χρυσοῦς στεφάνους ἐπηγγείλατο τοῖς πρώτοις ἐπὶ τὸ τεῖχος ἀναβᾶσι καὶ τὰς εἰθισμένας δωρεὰς τοῖς ἐπιφανῶς ἀνδραγαθήσασι· τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔφη τὴν ἐπιβολὴν αὐτῷ ταύτην ὑποδεδειχέναι τὸν Ποσειδῶνα παραστάντα κατὰ τὸν ὕπνον, καὶ φάναι συνεργήσειν ἐπιφανῶς κατ᾽ αὐτὸν τὸν τῆς πράξεως καιρὸν οὕτως ὥστε παντὶ τῷ στρατοπέδῳ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ χρείαν ἐναργῆ γενέσθαι. τῶν δὲ κατὰ τὴν παράκλησιν λόγων ἅμα μὲν ἀπολογισμοῖς ἀκριβέσι μεμιγμένων, ἅμα δ᾽ ἐπαγγελίαις χρυσῶν στεφάνων, ἐπὶ δὲ πᾶσι τούτοις θεοῦ προνοίᾳ, τελέως μεγάλην ὁρμὴν καὶ προθυμίαν παρίστασθαι συνέβαινε τοῖς νεανίσκοις.

> "Scipio, then, when the fleet arrived in due time, decided to call a meeting of his troops and address them, using no other arguments than those which had carried conviction to himself (…). After proving to them that the project was feasible, and pointing out briefly what loss its success would entail on the enemy and what an advantage it would be to themselves, he went on to promise gold crowns to those who should be the first to mount the wall and the usual rewards to such as displayed conspicuous courage. Finally he told them that it was Neptune who had first suggested this plan to him, appearing to him in his sleep, and promising that when the time for the action came he would render such conspicuous aid that his intervention would be manifest to the whole army. The combination in this speech of accurate calculation, of the promise of gold crowns, and therewithal of confidence in the help of Providence created great enthusiasm and ardor among the soldiers." (Trans. Paton 2011 (1925), 143)

13. Plut. *Sull.* 9,4:

> λέγεται δὲ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους αὐτῷ Σύλλᾳ φανῆναι θεὸν ἣν τιμῶσι Ῥωμαῖοι παρὰ Καππαδοκῶν μαθόντες, εἴτε δὴ Σελήνην οὖσαν εἴτε Ἀθηνᾶν εἴτε Ἐνυώ. ταύτην ὁ Σύλλας ἔδοξεν ἐπιστᾶσαν ἐγχειρίσαι κεραυνὸν αὑτῷ, καὶ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἕκαστον ὀνομάζουσαν τῶν ἐκείνου βάλλειν κελεῦσαι, τοὺς δὲ πίπτειν βαλλομένους καὶ ἀφανίζεσθαι. θαρσήσας δὲ τῇ ὄψει καὶ φράσας τῷ συνάρχοντι μεθ' ἡμέραν ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥώμην ἡγεῖτο.

> "It is said, also, that to Sulla himself there appeared in his dreams a goddess whom the Romans learned to worship from the Cappadocians, whether she is Luna, or Minerva, or Bellona. This goddess, as Sulla fancied, stood by his side and put into his hand a thunder-bolt, and naming his enemies one by one, bade him smite them with it; and they were all smitten, and fell, and vanished away. Encouraged by the vision, he told it to his colleague, and at break of day led on towards Rome." (Trans. Perrin 1916, 353)

14. Plut. *Sull.* 28,4–8:

Ἐκ τούτου περὶ Σίγνιον Μάριος ὀγδοήκοντα καὶ πέντε σπείρας ἔχων προὐκαλεῖτο Σύλλαν. ὁ δὲ καὶ πάνυ πρόθυμος ἦν διαγωνίσασθαι κατ᾽ ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν· ἐτύγχανε γὰρ ὄψιν ἑωρακὼς τοιάνδε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους. ἐδόκει τὸν γέροντα Μάριον τεθνηκότα πάλαι τῷ παιδὶ Μαρίῳ παραινεῖν φυλάξασθαι τὴν ἐπιοῦσαν ἡμέραν ὡς μεγάλην αὐτῷ δυστυχίαν φέρουσαν. διὰ τοῦτο μὲν δὴ πρόθυμος ὁ Σύλλας ἦν μάχεσθαι, καὶ μετεπέμπετο τὸν Δολοβέλλαν ἄπωθεν στρατοπεδεύοντα. τῶν δὲ πολεμίων ἐφισταμένων ταῖς ὁδοῖς καὶ ἀποφραττόντων οἱ τοῦ Σύλλα προσμαχόμενοι καὶ ὁδοποιοῦντες ἔκαμνον· καὶ πολὺς ὄμβρος ἅμα τοῖς ἔργοις ἐπιγενόμενος μᾶλλον ἐκάκωσεν αὐτούς. ὅθεν οἱ ταξίαρχοι προσιόντες τῷ Σύλλᾳ ἐδέοντο τὴν μάχην ἀναβαλέσθαι, δεικνύντες ἅμα τοὺς στρατιώτας ἐρριμμένους ὑπὸ κόπου καὶ προσαναπαυομένους χαμᾶζε τοῖς θυρεοῖς κεκλιμένοις. ἐπεὶ δὲ συνεχώρησεν ἄκων καὶ πρόσταγμα καταζεύξεως ἔδωκεν, ἀρχομένων αὐτῶν τὸν χάρακα βάλλειν καὶ τάφρον ὀρύσσειν πρὸ τῆς στρατοπεδείας, ἐπήλαυνε σοβαρῶς ὁ Μάριος προϊππεύων ὡς ἀτάκτους καὶ τεθορυβημένους διασκεδάσων. ἐνταῦθα τῷ Σύλλᾳ τὴν κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους φωνὴν ὁ δαίμων συνετέλει. ὀργὴ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς στρατιώταις παρέστη, καὶ παυσάμενοι τῶν ἔργων τοὺς μὲν ὑσσοὺς κατέπηξαν ἐπὶ τῇ τάφρῳ, σπασάμενοι δὲ τὰ ξίφη καὶ συναλαλάξαντες ἐν χερσὶν ἦσαν τῶν πολεμίων. οἱ δὲ οὐ πολὺν ὑπέστησαν χρόνον, ἀλλὰ γίνεται πολὺς φόνος αὐτῶν τραπέντων. (…) ἔνιοι δέ φασιν, ὧν καὶ Φαινεστέλλας ἐστίν, οὐδὲ αἰσθέσθαι τῆς μάχης τὸν Μάριον, ἀλλ᾽ ἐξ ἀγρυπνιῶν καὶ κόπων ὑπὸ σκιᾷ τινι χαμαὶ κατακλινέντα τοῦ συνθήματος δοθέντος ἐνδοῦναι πρὸς ὕπνον, εἶτα μόλις ἐξεγείρεσθαι τῆς φυγῆς γενομένης.

"After this, at Signia, Marius, with eighty-five cohorts, challenged Sulla to battle. Now Sulla was very eager to have the issue settled on that day; for he had seen a vision in his dreams, as follows. He thought he saw the elder Marius, who was long since dead, advising his son Marius to beware of the ensuing day, since it would bring him a great calamity. For this reason, then, Sulla was eager to fight a battle, and was trying to get Dolabella, who was encamped at some distance, to join him. But the enemy beset the

roads and hemmed Sulla in, and his soldiers were worn out with fighting to open a passage. Much rain also came upon them while they were at work and added to their distress. The tribunes therefore came to Sulla and begged him to defer the battle, showing him the soldiers prostrated with weariness and resting on their shields, which they had laid upon the ground. Sulla yielded reluctantly, and gave orders to pitch a camp, but just as his men were beginning to dig a trench and throw up the rampart before it, Marius attacked them confidently, riding ahead of his lines, and hoping to scatter his enemies while they were in disorder and confusion. There the Deity fulfilled the words which Sulla had heard in his dreams. For Sulla's rage imparted itself to his soldiers, and leaving off their work, they planted their javelins in the trench, drew their swords, and with a general shout came to close quarters with their enemies. These did not hold their ground long, but took to flight, and were slain in great numbers. (…) But there are some who say, and Fenestella is one of these, that Marius knew nothing of the battle, but was forced by loss of sleep and weariness to cast himself upon the ground in a shady place when the signal for battle was given, and there gave way to sleep, and was then roused with difficulty when the rout took place." (Trans. Perrin 1916, 415–417)

15. Plut. *Luc.* 12,1–2:

Λούκουλλος δὲ πρῶτον εἰς Κύζικον παρελθὼν ἀπέλαυσεν ἡδονῆς καὶ φιλοφροσύνης πρεπούσης· ἔπειτα ναυτικὸν ἐξηρτύετο τὸν Ἑλλήσποντον ἐπιπορευόμενος. εἰς δὲ Τρῳάδα καταχθεὶς ἐσκήνωσε μὲν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης, κατακοιμηθεὶς δὲ νύκτωρ ἐδόκει τὴν θεὰν ὁρᾶν ἐφεστῶσαν αὐτῷ καὶ λέγουσαν·

Τί κνώσσεις, μεγάθυμε λέον; νεβροὶ δε τοι ἐγγύς.

ἐξαναστὰς δὲ καὶ τοὺς φίλους καλέσας διηγεῖτο τὴν ὄψιν ἔτι νυκτὸς οὔσης. καὶ παρῆσαν ἐξ Ἰλίου τινὲς ἀπαγγέλλοντες ὤφθαι περὶ τὸν Ἀχαιῶν λιμένα τρισκαίδεκα πεντήρεις τῶν βασιλικῶν ἐπὶ Λῆμνον πλεούσας. εὐθὺς οὖν ἀναχθεὶς τούτους μὲν εἷλε καὶ τὸν στρατηγὸν αὐτῶν Ἰσίδωρον ἀπέκτεινεν, ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς ἄλλους ἔπλει πρῳρέας.

"Lucullus, in the first place, entered Cyzicus in triumph, and enjoyed the pleasant welcome which was his due; then he proceeded to the Hellespont, and began to equip a fleet. On visiting the Troad, he pitched his tent in the sacred precinct of Aphrodite, and in the night, after he had fallen asleep, he thought he saw the goddess standing over him and saying: 'Why dost thou sleep, great lion? the fawns are near for thy taking.' Rising up from sleep and calling his friends, he narrated to them his vision, while it was yet night. And lo, there came certain men from Ilium, with tidings that thirteen of the king's galleys had been seen off the harbour of the Achaeans, making for Lemnos Accordingly, Lucullus put to sea at once, captured these, slew their commander, Isodorus, and then sailed in pursuit of the other captains, whom these were seeking to join." (Trans. Perrin 1914, 505–507)

16a. Plut. *Luc.* 23,2–6:

ἐπεὶ δ᾽ Ἄππιός τε ἦκε καὶ πολεμητέον πρὸς Τιγράνην ἐφαίνετο, παρῆλθεν αὖθις εἰς Πόντον, καὶ τοὺς στρατιώτας ἀναλαβὼν ἐπολιόρκει Σινώπην, μᾶλλον δὲ τοὺς κατέχοντας αὐτὴν βασιλικοὺς Κίλικας, οἳ πολλοὺς μὲν ἀνελόντες τῶν Σινωπέων, τὴν δὲ πόλιν ἐμπρήσαντες διὰ νυκτὸς ἔφυγον. αἰσθόμενος δ᾽ ὁ Λούκουλλος καὶ παρελθὼν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ὀκτακισχιλίους αὐτῶν τοὺς ἐγκαταλειφθέντας ἀπέκτεινε, τοῖς δ᾽ ἄλλοις ἀπέδωκε τὰ οἰκεῖα καὶ τῆς πόλεως ἐπεμελήθη μάλιστα διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ὄψιν. ἐδόκει τινὰ κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους εἰπεῖν παραστάντα· "Πρόελθε, Λούκουλλε, μικρόν· ἥκει γὰρ Αὐτόλυκος ἐντυχεῖν σοι βουλόμενος." ἐξαναστὰς δὲ τὴν μὲν ὄψιν οὐκ εἶχε συμβαλεῖν εἰς ὅ τι φέροι, τὴν δὲ πόλιν εἶλε κατ᾽ ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν, καὶ τοὺς ἐκπλέοντας τῶν Κιλίκων διώκων ὁρᾷ παρὰ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν ἀνδριάντα κείμενον, ὃν ἐκκομίζοντες οἱ Κίλικες οὐκ ἔφθησαν ἐμβαλέσθαι· τὸ δ᾽ ἔργον ἦν Σθένιδος τῶν καλῶν. φράζει οὖν τις, ὡς Αὐτολύκου τοῦ κτίσαντος τὴν Σινώπην ὁ ἀνδριὰς εἴη. (…) Ταῦτ᾽ ἀκούων ὁ Λούκουλλος ἀνεμιμνήσκετο τῆς Σύλλα παραινέσεως· παρῄνει δὲ διὰ τῶν ὑπομνημάτων ἐκεῖνος μηδὲν οὕτως ἀξιόπιστον ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ βέβαιον, ὡς ὅ τι ἂν ἀποσημανθῇ διὰ τῶν ἐνυπνίων.

> "But when Appius came, and it was plain that war must be waged against Tigranes, he went back into Pontus, put himself at the head of his soldiers, and laid siege to Sinopé, or rather, to the Cilicians who were occupying that city for the king. These slew many of the Sinopians, fired the city, and set out to fly by night. But Lucullus saw what was going on, made his way into the city, and slew eight thousand of the Cilicians who were still there. Then he restored to the citizens their private property, and ministered to the needs of the city, more especially on account of the following vision. He thought in his sleep that a form stood by his side and said: ' Go forward a little, Lucullus; for Autolycus is come, and wishes to meet you.' On rising from sleep, he was unable to conjecture what the vision meant; but he took the city on that day, and as he pursued the Cilicians who were sailing away, he saw a statue lying on the beach, which the Cilicians had not succeeded in getting on board with them. It was the work of Sthenis, and one of his masterpieces. Well then, some one told Lucullus that it was the statue of Autolycus, the founder of Sinopé. (…) On hearing this, Lucullus called to mind the advice of Sulla, in his Memoirs, which was to think nothing so trustworthy and sure as that which is signified by dreams." (Trans. Perrin 1914, 543–545)

16b. App. *Mith.* 370–373:

> Σινώπη δ' ἀντεῖχεν ἔτι καρτερῶς, καὶ διεναυμάχησεν οὐ κακῶς. πολιορκούμενοι δὲ τὰς ναῦς τὰς βαρυτέρας σφῶν διέπρησαν, καὶ ἐς τὰς κουφοτέρας ἐμβάντες ἀπέδρασαν. Λούκουλλος δὲ τὴν πόλιν εὐθὺς ἐλευθέραν ἠφίει δι' ἐνύπνιον, ὃ τοιόνδε ἦν. Αὐτόλυκόν φασιν, ἐπὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόνας Ἡρακλεῖ συστρατεύοντα, ὑπὸ χειμῶνος ἐς Σινώπην καταχθῆναι καὶ τῆς πόλεως κρατῆσαι· ἀνδριάς τε σεβάσμιος τοῖς Σινωπεῦσιν ἔχρα, ὃν οἱ μὲν Σινωπεῖς οὐ φθάσαντες ἐς φυγὴν ἐπαγαγέσθαι, ὀθόναις καὶ καλῳδίοις περιέδησαν· οὐδὲν δ' ὁ Λούκουλλος εἰδὼς οὐδὲ προμαθὼν ἔδοξεν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κληθεὶς ὁρᾶν αὐτόν, καὶ τῆς ἐπιούσης τὸν ἀνδριάντα τινῶν περιβεβλημένον παραφερόντων ἐκλῦσαι κελεύσας, εἶδεν οἷον ἔδοξε νυκτὸς ἑωρακέναι. τὸ μὲν δὴ ἐνύπνιον τοιόνδε ἦν, (…)

"Sinope, however, held out against him stubbornly, their fleet fighting with some success. But when he laid siege to them, they burned their heavier ships, embarked on the lighter ones, and slipped away. Lucullus immediately declared the city free. He did this because of a dream he had, which was as follows. There is a story that Autolycus, who accompanied Heracles on his expedition against the Amazons, was driven by a storm to Sinope and took control of it, and that a sacred statue of Autolycus used to give oracular responses to the citizens of Sinope. When they were fleeing, the Sinopeans did not have time to take the statue with them, and so they wrapped it up with linen cloths tied down with ropes. Lucullus did not know this story and was told nothing about it before he saw Autolycus calling to him in a dream. The next day, when some men went past carrying the wrapped statue and he ordered them to unwrap it, he saw the vision he thought he had seen in the night. Such was the dream he had. (…)" (Trans. McGing 2019, 311)

17. Plut. *Pomp.* 32,3–5:

εἶτα μέντοι περὶ τὸν Εὐφράτην καταλαβὼν αὐτὸν ὁ Πομπήϊος παρεστρατοπέδευσε· καὶ δεδιὼς μὴ φθάσῃ περάσας τὸν Εὐφράτην, ἐκ μέσων νυκτῶν ἐπῆγεν ὡπλισμένην τὴν στρατιάν· καθ᾽ ὃν χρόνον λέγεται τὸν Μιθριδάτην ὄψιν ἐν ὕπνοις ἰδεῖν τὰ μέλλοντα προδηλοῦσαν. ἐδόκει γὰρ οὐρίῳ πνεύματι πλέων τὸ Ποντικὸν πέλαγος ἤδη Βόσπορον καθορᾶν καὶ φιλοφρονεῖσθαι τοὺς συμπλέοντας, ὡς ἄν τις ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ σαφεῖ καὶ βεβαίῳ χαίρων· ἄφνω δὲ ἀναφανῆναι πάντων ἔρημος ἐπὶ λεπτοῦ ναυαγίου διαφερόμενος. ἐν τοιούτοις δὲ αὐτὸν ὄντα πάθεσι καὶ φάσμασιν ἐπιστάντες ἀνέστησαν οἱ φίλοι, φράζοντες ἐπιέναι Πομπήϊον. ἦν οὖν ἐξ ἀνάγκης μαχητέον ὑπὲρ τοῦ χάρακος, καὶ προαγαγόντες οἱ στρατηγοὶ τὴν δύναμιν ἔταξαν.

"Then, however, Pompey overtook him near the Euphrates river, and encamped close by; and fearing lest the king should get the advantage of him by crossing the Euphrates, he put his army in battle array and led it against him at midnight. At this time Mithridates is said to have seen a vision in his sleep, revealing what should come to pass. He dreamed that

he was sailing the Pontic Sea with a fair wind, and was already in sight of the Bosporus, and was greeting pleasantly his fellow-voyagers, as a man would do in his joy over a manifest and sure deliverance; but suddenly he saw himself bereft of all his companions and tossed about on a small piece of wreckage. As he dreamed of such distress, his friends came to his couch and roused him with the news that Pompey was advancing to the attack. He was therefore compelled to give battle in defence of his camp, and his generals led out their troops and put them in array." (Trans. Perrin 1917, 199)

18a. Plut. *Caes.* 42,1–2:

Ὡς δὲ εἰς τὴν Φαρσαλίαν ἐμβαλόντες ἀμφότεροι κατεστρατοπέδευσαν, ὁ μὲν Πομπήϊος αὖθις εἰς τὸν ἀρχαῖον ἀνεκρούετο λογισμὸν τὴν γνώμην, ἔτι καὶ φασμάτων οὐκ αἰσίων προσγενομένων καὶ καθ᾽ ὕπνον ὄψεως. ἐδόκει γὰρ ἑαυτὸν ὁρᾶν ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ κροτούμενον ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων, […] οἱ δὲ περὶ αὐτὸν οὕτω θρασεῖς ἦσαν καὶ τὸ νίκημα ταῖς ἐλπίσι προειληφότες ὥστε φιλονεικεῖν ὑπὲρ τῆς Καίσαρος ἀρχιερωσύνης Δομίτιον καὶ Σπινθῆρα καὶ Σκηπίωνα διαμιλλωμένους ἀλλήλοις, πέμπειν δὲ πολλοὺς εἰς Ῥώμην μισθουμένους καὶ προκαταλαμβάνοντας οἰκίας ὑπατεύουσι καὶ στρατηγοῦσιν ἐπιτηδείους, ὡς εὐθὺς ἄρξοντες μετὰ τὸν πόλεμον. μάλιστα δὲ ἐσφάδαζον οἱ ἱππεῖς ἐπὶ τὴν μάχην ἠσκημένοι περιττῶς ὅπλων λαμπρότησι καὶ τροφαῖς ἵππων καὶ κάλλει σωμάτων, μέγα φρονοῦντες καὶ διὰ τὸ πλῆθος, ἑπτακισχίλιοι πρὸς χιλίους τοὺς Καίσαρος ὄντες. ἦν δὲ καὶ τὸ τῶν πεζῶν πλῆθος οὐκ ἀγχώμαλον, ἀλλὰ τετρακισμύριοι καὶ πεντακισχίλιοι παρετάττοντο δισμυρίοις καὶ δισχιλίοις.

"But when both armies entered the plain of Pharsalus and encamped there, Pompey's mind reverted again to its former reasoning, and besides, there befell him unlucky appearances and a vision in his sleep. He dreamed, namely, that he saw himself in his theatre applauded by the Romans, […] Those about him, however, were so confident, and so hopefully anticipated the victory, that Domitius and Spinther and Scipio disputed earnestly with one another over Caesar's office of Pontifex Maximus, and many sent agents to Rome to hire and take possession of houses suitable

for praetors and consuls, assuming that they would immediately hold these offices after the war. And most of all were his cavalry impatient for the battle, since they had a splendid array of shining armour, well-fed horses, and handsome persons, and were in high spirits too on account of their numbers, which were seven thousand to Caesar's one thousand. The numbers of the infantry also were unequal, since forty-five thousand were arrayed against twenty-two thousand." (Trans. Perrin 1919a, 543–545)

18b. Plut. *Pomp.* 68,1–3:

Ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως ἐγκείμενοι καὶ θορυβοῦντες, ἐπεὶ κατέβησαν εἰς τὸ Φαρσάλιον πεδίον, ἠνάγκασαν βουλὴν προθεῖναι τὸν Πομπήϊον, ἐν ᾗ Λαβιηνὸς ὁ τῶν ἱππέων ἄρχων πρῶτος ἀναστὰς ὤμοσε μὴ ἀναχωρήσειν ἐκ τῆς μάχης, εἰ μὴ τρέψαιτο τοὺς πολεμίους· τὰ δὲ αὐτὰ καὶ πάντες ὤμνυσαν. τῆς δὲ νυκτὸς ἔδοξε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους Πομπήϊος εἰς τὸ θέατρον εἰσιόντος αὐτοῦ κροτεῖν τὸν δῆμον, αὐτὸς δὲ κοσμεῖν ἱερὸν Ἀφροδίτης νικηφόρου πολλοῖς λαφύροις. καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐθάρρει, τὰ δὲ ὑπέθραττεν αὐτὸν ἡ ὄψις, δεδοικότα μὴ τῷ γένει τῷ Καίσαρος εἰς Ἀφροδίτην ἀνήκοντι δόξα καὶ λαμπρότης ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ γένηται· καὶ πανικοί τινες θόρυβοι διάττοντες ἐξανέστησαν αὐτόν. ἐωθινῆς δὲ φυλακῆς ὑπὲρ τοῦ Καίσαρος στρατοπέδου πολλὴν ἡσυχίαν ἄγοντος ἐξέλαμψε μέγα φῶς, ἐκ δὲ τούτου λαμπὰς ἀρθεῖσα φλογοειδὴς ἐπὶ τὸ Πομπηΐου κατέσκηψε· καὶ τοῦτο ἰδεῖν φησι Καῖσαρ αὐτὸς ἐπιὼν τὰς φυλακάς.

"But notwithstanding, by their importunities and agitations, after they had gone down into the plain of Pharsalia, they forced Pompey to hold a council of war, where Labienus, the commander of the cavalry, rose first and took an oath that he would not come back from the battle unless he routed the enemy; then all likewise swore the same oath. That night Pompey dreamed that as he entered his theatre the people clapped their hands, and that he decorated a temple of Venus Victrix with many spoils. On some accounts he was encouraged, but on others depressed, by the dream; he feared lest the race of Caesar, which went back to Venus, was to receive glory and splendour through him; and certain panic tumults which went rushing through the camp roused him from sleep.

> Furthermore, during the morning watch a great light shone out above the camp of Caesar, which was perfectly quiet, and a flaming torch rose from it and darted down upon the camp of Pompey; Caesar himself says he saw this as he was visiting the watches." (Trans. Perrin 1917, 293)

18c. App. *B Civ.* 2,10,68–69:

> μικρόν τε πρὸ ἕω πανικὸν ἐνέπεσεν αὐτοῦ τῷ στρατῷ· καὶ τόδε περιδραμὼν αὐτὸς καὶ καταστήσας ἀνεπαύετο σὺν ὕπνῳ βαθεῖ· περιεγειράντων δ' αὐτὸν τῶν φίλων, ὄναρ ἔφασκεν ἄρτι νεὼν ἐν Ῥώμῃ καθιεροῦν Ἀφροδίτῃ νικηφόρῳ. Καὶ τόδε μὲν ἀγνοίᾳ τῆς Καίσαρος εὐχῆς οἵ τε φίλοι καὶ ὁ στρατὸς ἅπας πυθόμενοι ἥδοντο, καὶ τἆλλα ἀλόγως σὺν ὁρμῇ καὶ καταφρονήσει χωροῦντες ἐπὶ τὸ ἔργον ὡς ἐπὶ ἕτοιμον. ὧν γε πολλοὶ καὶ τὰς σκηνὰς δάφναις ἀνέστεφον ἤδη, συμβόλῳ νίκης· καὶ οἱ θεράποντες αὐτοῖς δαῖτα λαμπροτάτην ἐπόρσυνον· εἰσὶ δ' οἳ καὶ περὶ τῆς Καίσαρος ἀρχιερωσύνης ἐς ἀλλήλους ἤδη διήριζον. ἅπερ ὁ Πομπήιος οἷα πολέμων ἔμπειρος ἀπεστρέφετο καὶ νεμεσῶν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἐνεκαλύπτετο, κατεσιώπα δ' ὅμως ὑπὸ ὄκνου καὶ δέους, ὥσπερ οὐ στρατηγῶν ἔτι, ἀλλὰ στρατηγούμενος καὶ πάντα πράσσων ὑπὸ ἀνάγκης παρὰ γνώμην. τοσοῦτον ἀνδρὶ μεγαλουργῷ καὶ παρὰ πᾶν ἔργον ἐς ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν εὐτυχεστάτῳ γενομένῳ τὸ δύσθυμον ἐνεπεπτώκει, εἴτε ὅτι τὰ συμφέροντα κρίνων οὐκ ἔπειθεν, (…)· εἴτε τι καὶ μαντικώτερον αὐτὸν πλησιάζοντος ἤδη τοῦ κακοῦ συνετάρασσε, μέλλοντα τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἐκ δυναστείας τοσῆσδε ἀθρόως ἐκπεσεῖσθαι. τοσοῦτον δ' οὖν εἰπὼν τοῖς φίλοις, ὅτι ἥδε ἡ ἡμέρα, ὁπότερος ἂν ἐπικρατήσῃ, μεγάλων ἐς αἰεὶ Ῥωμαίοις ἄρξει κακῶν, παρέτασσεν ἐς τὴν μάχην· (…).

> "Shortly before daylight panic seized his army. He himself rushed around and calmed the men and then fell into a deep sleep. When his staff woke him, he kept telling them that he had just dreamed he was in the process of dedicating a temple in Rome to Venus the Bringer of Victory. In their ignorance of Caesar's vow, Pompey's staff and the whole army were delighted at hearing of his dream, and in other respects too were going into battle with an unreasonable degree of enthusiasm and contempt, as if it were already won. Many of them were already decorating their tents with laurel branches, the symbol of victory, and their servants were preparing

a splendid banquet for them. There were even some who began to compete with each other for Caesar's High Priesthood. Given his military experience, Pompey rejected all this, and although justly angry at such conduct, kept his anger hidden, and in spite of his feelings said nothing out of hesitation and fear, as if he were no longer in command but under someone else's command, and forced to do everything against his will. Such was the gloom that affected this high-achieving man who up to that day had enjoyed extreme good fortune in everything he had done. This may have been because, having decided on the expedient course to follow, he failed to make it convincing, (…). Or, it could be that some premonition of the already approaching disaster disturbed him as he was on the point of totally losing such extensive dominion that day. At any rate, after making only this remark to his staff, that no matter which side was victorious, that day would be the beginning of great and permanent troubles for Rome, he drew up his forces for battle." (Trans. McGing 2020, 373–375)

19. Tac. *Ann.* 1,65:

Nox per diversa inquies, cum barbari festis epulis, laeto cantu aut truci sonore subiecta vallium ac resultantis saltus complerent, apud Romanos invalidi ignes, interruptae voces atque ipsi passim adiacerent vallo, oberrarent tentoriis, insomnes magis quam pervigiles. Ducemque terruit dira quies: nam Quintilium Varum sanguine oblitum et paludibus emersum cernere et audire visus est velut vocantem, non tamen obsecutus et manum intendentis reppulisse. Coepta luce missae in latera legiones, metu an contumacia, locum deseruere, capto propere campo umentia ultra.

"It was a night of unrest, though in contrasted fashions. The barbarians, in high carousal, filled the low-lying valleys and echoing woods with chants of triumph or fierce vociferations: among the Romans were languid fires, broken challenges, and groups of men stretched beside the parapet or straying amid the tents, unasleep but something less than awake. The general's night was disturbed by a sinister and alarming dream: for he imagined that he saw Quintilius Varus risen, blood-bedraggled, from the marsh, and heard him calling, though he refused to obey and pushed him

back when he extended his hand. Day broke, and the legions sent to the wings, either through fear or wilfulness, abandoned their post, hurriedly occupying a level piece of ground beyond the morass." (Trans. Jackson 1931, 355)

20. Tac. *Ann.* 2,14:

Nox eadem laetam Germanico quietem tulit, viditque se operatum et sanguine sacro respersa praetexta pulchriorem aliam manibus aviae Augustae accepisse. Auctus omine, addicentibus auspiciis, vocat contionem et quae sapientia provisa aptaque inminenti pugnae disserit.

"The same night brought Germanicus a reassuring vision: for he dreamed that he was offering sacrifice, and that—as his vestment was bespattered with the blood of the victim—he had received another, more beautiful, from the hand of his grandmother, Augusta. Elated by the omen, and finding the auspices favourable, he summoned a meeting of the troops and laid before them the measures his knowledge had suggested and the points likely to be of service in the coming struggle: (…)" (Trans. Jackson 1931, 403)