

ABSTRACT

Reading Dreams: An Audience-Critical Approach to the Dreams in the Gospel of Matthew

Derek S. Dodson, B.A., M.Div.

Mentor: Charles H. Talbert, Ph.D.

This dissertation seeks to read the dreams in the Gospel of Matthew (1:18b-25; 2:12, 13-15, 19-21, 22; 27:19) as the authorial audience. This approach requires an understanding of the social and literary character of dreams in the Greco-Roman world. Chapter Two describes the social function of dreams, noting that dreams constituted one form of divination in the ancient world. This religious character of dreams is further described by considering the practice of dreams in ancient magic and Greco-Roman cults as well as the role of dream interpreters. This chapter also includes a sketch of the theories and classification of dreams that developed in the ancient world. Chapters Three and Four demonstrate the literary dimensions of dreams in Greco-Roman literature. I refer to this literary character of dreams as the “script of dreams;” that is, there is a “script” (form) to how one narrates or reports dreams in ancient literature, and at the same time dreams could be adapted, or “scripted,” for a range of literary

functions. This exploration of the literary representation of dreams is nuanced by considering the literary form of dreams, dreams in the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, the inventiveness of literary dreams, and the literary function of dreams.

In light of the social and literary contexts of dreams, the dreams of the Gospel of Matthew are analyzed in Chapter Five. It is demonstrated that Matthew's use of dreams as a literary convention corresponds to the script of dreams in other Greco-Roman narratives. This correspondence includes dreams as a motif of the birth *topos* (1:18b-25), the association of dreams and prophecy (1:22-23; 2:15, 23), the use of the double-dream report (2:12 and 2:13-15), and dreams as an ominous sign in relation to an individual's death (27:19). The contribution of this research is a more textured or multi-dimensional reading of the Matthean dreams that is lacking in other studies.

An appendix considers the Matthean transfiguration as a dream-vision report.

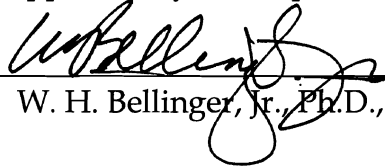
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by

Derek S. Dodson, B.A., M.Div.

A Dissertation

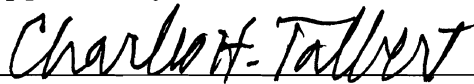
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W. H. Bellinger, Jr., Ph.D., Chairperson

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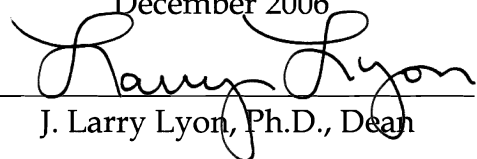


Mikeal C. Parsons, Ph.D.



Jeffrey S. Hamilton, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In a modern, post-Freud age, dreams are understood as manifestations of an individual's sub-conscious, a kind of window into the psyche of a person. Dreams in antiquity, however, were understood as a means of how the divine communicates to humanity. This is not to say that the ancients did not have some perception that some dreams might come about because of the "thoughts of the day,"¹ but this seems to be more of an explanation for those dreams that did not prove to be significant. The primary understanding of dreams in antiquity was that dreams represent some objective experience that connected humanity with the will of the divine. Ancients did not have dreams, they were encountered by dreams. In her study on ancient dreams, Patricia Cox Miller states, "[D]reams were autonomous; they were not conceptualized as products of a personal sub- or unconscious but rather as visual images that present themselves to the dreamer."² Thus, ancient dreams had a socio-religious dimension, which in turn influenced the literary representation of dreams in antiquity.

¹Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.16.2; cf. Artimodorus, *Onir.* 1.1; Cicero, *Div.* 1.45.

²Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 17.

The Gospel of Matthew is the only canonical Gospel that includes dreams in its narrative. There are three dream reports (1:18b-25; 2:13-15, 19-21) and three references to dreams (2:12, 22; 27:19). Given the ancient understanding of dreams and the accompanying literary representation of dreams, how would an ancient audience understand, or “make sense,” of the Matthean dreams? This dissertation seeks to answer this question by reading Matthew’s dreams as the “authorial audience.” Before describing the theoretical basis of this approach, however, I will review how Matthew’s dreams have been studied by previous scholarship, and how this research project seeks to improve upon these studies.

Previous Scholarship and Present Contribution

Unlike the dreams (and visions) of Acts,³ those of Matthew lack a full and comprehensive investigation. The dreams of Matthew’s Gospel have been addressed only in journal articles or as a part of larger research projects.⁴ Earlier

³For example, John S. Hanson, “The Dream/Vision Report and Acts 10:1 – 11:18: A Form-Critical Study” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1978); and Michael James Day, “The Function of Post-Pentecost Dream/Vision Reports in Acts,” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1994); John B. Faulkenberry Miller, “‘Convinced that God has called us’” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2004).

⁴W. L. Dulière, “La révélation par songe dans l’Évangile de Matthieu,” *AIPHOS* 13 (1953): 665-69; S. Cavalletti, “I sogni di San Giuseppe,” *BeO* 2 (1960): 149-51; Dominic M. Crossan, “Structure & Theology of Mt. 1.18-2.23,” *CaJos* 16 (1968): 119-35; Tarcisio Stramare, “I sogni di S. Giuseppe,” *CaJos* 19 (1971): 104-22; George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt. 1-2* (AnBib 63; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 185-7, 223-5, 234-42; 294-7; Robert Gnuse, “Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 97-120; Raymond E. Brown,

analyses addressed the question of sources and the historicity of the dreams in Matthew. W. L. Dulière argues that the infancy narrative of Matthew's Gospel (chs. 1-2) is a distinguishable source based on the "obsessive preoccupation" ⁵ with dreams, even referring to the author of this source as *l'Oniriste*.⁶ Inferring that Dulière's source critical study denies the authenticity of the Gospel, S. Cavalletti defends the historicity of the dreams in Matthew by appealing to the precedent of the Old Testament, where God often uses dreams for divine communication.⁷ Tarcisio Stramare also contends that the Matthean dreams are historical fact, which militates against the designation of "literary genre" for the presentation of dreams in Matthew.⁸ These articles have contributed little to

The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (new updated ed.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 108-17, 129, 194-6; Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 140-65; Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (JSNTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 153-7; Marco Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium: Einige Beobachtungen," *JAC* 41 (1998): 5-47; Frances Lynn Flannery-Dailey, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2000), 402-16; and Derek S. Dodson, "Dreams, the Ancient Novels, and the Gospel of Matthew: An Intertextual Study," *PRSt* 29 (2002): 39-52.

⁵Dulière, "La révélation par songe dans l'Évangile de Matthieu," 665. Dulière's source critical work lacks the sophistication and insight of later redactions critics and therefore is insignificant.

⁶Dulière, "La révélation par songe dans l'Évangile de Matthieu," 667.

⁷Cavalletti, "I sogni di San Giuseppe," 149-51, esp. 149.

⁸Stramare, "I sogni di S. Giuseppe," 122. Interesting, Stramare differentiates between "literary genre" (*genere letterario*) and "literary outline" (*schema letterario*), a feature that he concedes the dreams in Matthew do exhibit.

research on the Matthean dreams and reflect more the concerns of conservative Roman Catholic theology. Moreover, Stramare's denial of an identifiable genre for the narration of dreams is untenable.⁹

The more significant studies of dreams in Matthew's Gospel revolve around the issues of (1) Moses typology, (2) Matthew's redaction of Matt 1-2, (3) the literary form of the dreams, and (4) narrative criticism.

Moses Typology and the Dream of Matt 1:18b-25

Scholarship has convincingly demonstrated that Matt 1–2, and indeed Matthew as a whole, reflects a Moses typology.¹⁰ Because the various, developing traditions about Moses' birth often include dreams by Pharaoh, Moses' sister Miriam, and/or Moses' father Amram, the opening dream narrative of Matthew (1:18b-25) is noted as a contributing feature to the Moses typology in Matt 1–2. Indeed, Josephus narrates a dream to Amram, which is the closest parallel of dreams in the Moses traditions to Joseph's dream in Matt 1:1-18.¹¹

⁹See John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.2: 1395-1427; cp. Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," 97-120.

¹⁰For example, see Crossan, "Structure & Theology," 119-35; Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 112-16; and Allison, *The New Moses*, 140-65.

¹¹Josephus, *Ant.* 2.210-217. It should be noted that this is the only source in which a dream is attributed to Amram.

I do not deny the presence of a Moses typology and the contribution of the first dream-vision report (1:18-25) to that typology. In Chapter five, however, I will argue that the authorial audience of Matthew's Gospel makes the Mosaic connection with the first dream narrative only *retrospectively* in light of Matt 2. Giving priority to the Gospel of Matthew's own narrative shape and sequence and its ancient literary context, I will make a case that the authorial audience's initial understanding of the dream of Matt 1:18b-25 would be in connection with the opening genealogy (1:1-17; note γένεσις in 1:1, 18) and so reflects the pattern and convention of the literary-rhetorical tradition of encomium.

Matthean Dreams and Redaction Criticism

The dreams of Matt 1-2 also have been the subject of redaction critics, particularly Raymond Brown and George Soares Prabhu.¹² For both Brown and Soares Prabhu, the three dream reports in Matt 1-2 betray a pre-Matthean dream source that Matthew has used and redacted with other sources in the composition of the infancy narrative of Jesus. Much of their discussion concerns the content and structure of this dream source before Matthew's redaction of it. Once the source is reconstructed, these scholars proceed to describe Matthew's redactional activity, noting Matthean tendencies, the occurrence of internal

¹²Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 108-17, 129, 194-6; and Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 185-7, 223-5, 234-42; 294-7.

tensions or conflicts, and the presence of parallels with other material.¹³ In the end, the dreams in Matthew are approached by redaction critics diachronically in an effort to reconstruct the compositional history of Matt 1-2, albeit with the goal of elucidating the theological import of the final form of the text.

The diachronic character of redaction criticism, however, sometimes blurs the reading of the final form. For example, Brown and Soares Prabhu assert that the first dream narrative (1:18-25) has undergone the most redaction. But in their effort to reconstruct the pre-Matthean form of the dream report, they actually alter the form of the dream narrative as compared to other Greco-Roman dream reports. The description of Joseph as “righteous” (1:19) is taken as a Matthean redaction, and so is discussed separately from the dream report. However, Greco-Roman dream reports often include a remark about the dreamer’s character.¹⁴ Moreover, these redactional studies do not compare Matthew’s dream reports with other literary dreams of the Greco-Roman world, which results in a failure to recognize, and appreciate, Matthew’s participation in the literary practices of his time. Thus, the present study interprets the dreams of Matthew in their final form without consideration of Matthew’s redaction or possible pre-compositional sources or scenarios.

¹³Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 105-6.

¹⁴Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1406.

The Form of Matthew's Dreams

The most comprehensive study of the form of Matthew's dreams is that of Robert Gnuse.¹⁵ Gnuse argues that the dreams in Matthew's infancy narrative share "deep structural similarities"¹⁶ with the Elohist dreams that are found in Genesis, which indicates the formal dependence of Matthean dreams upon the Elohist dreams. In other words, Matthew has modeled his dreams on the dreams found in Genesis, particularly the dreams in the Elohist tradition. Because Gnuse's study is cited frequently in commentaries and other studies, I will provide a more detailed response to Gnuse in Chapter five. For now, though, it is sufficient to note that Frances Flannery-Dailey has demonstrated the "surprisingly standardized" formal pattern of dreams in the literature of the Ancient Near East, Hebrew Bible, Greece and Rome despite the span of time and cultures.¹⁷ This relatively consistent pattern makes it very difficult to argue for literary mimesis, which Gnuse is ultimately contending in regards to Matthew's use of Genesis.

Flannery-Dailey's analysis of Matthew's dreams is not without problems. She rightly criticizes Gnuse for "rejecting influence from Jewish dream material

¹⁵Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," 97-120.

¹⁶Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," 107.

¹⁷Flannery-Dailey, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers," "Standing at the Head of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2000), chs. 1-2.

contemporary with Matthew,"¹⁸ but in the end she also is too narrow in her comparative material (Jewish texts of Second Temple Judaism) and ignores her own findings (the "surprisingly standardized" formal pattern of dreams across time and cultures). Flannery-Dailey claims that

[L]ike many texts of Second Temple Judaism, Matthew presents dreams as revelations from the divine, with deep connections to prophecy, in a form that is uniquely Jewish. That is, there is an important development that the Matthean dreams make to the biblical traditions that is gleaned from late Second Temple Judaism, namely, *dreams in which an angel appears and imparts a message*.¹⁹

The Gospel of Matthew is certainly an example of a Jewish text near the end of the first century C.E., and the *content* of Matthew's dream reports indeed reflect a Jewish tradition and symbolic worldview, particularly in having an angel as a dream figure. To assert, however, that the "form" of Matthew's dreams are "uniquely Jewish" simply ignores dream reports in other Greco-Roman literature, including the connection to prophecy/oracles and dream figures imparting messages. This dissertation will argue that the dreams of Matthew represent a common literary convention and that the authorial audience would have made sense of these dreams in light of the way this literary convention functions in other Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian texts.

¹⁸Flannery-Dailey, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers," 403.

¹⁹Flannery-Dailey, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers," 415.

Narrative Critical Approach to Matthew's Dreams

The Matthean dreams have also been analyzed from a narrative critical perspective by Janice Capel Anderson.²⁰ Anderson investigates the dreams as examples of repetitive literary features that create anticipation and retrospection. On the one hand, Anderson's study is perceptive of the narrative function of Matthew's dreams. She notes that the clustering of dreams in Matt 1–2 emphasize the divine sanction of the character of Jesus and the beginning of his life. She also observes how the dreams "provide motivation (*divine* motivation) for the chain of events, for the geographical movements – the arrivals and departures – of characters."²¹ Anderson's descriptions of anticipation and retrospection in relation to the dreams, however, are less helpful. Only the first dream of Matthew (1:18b-25) anticipates a future event. The other dreams are command dreams that are obeyed by the dreamer, yet Anderson reads these in terms of anticipation and fulfillment instead of the more obvious command/obedience. Moreover, Anderson's narrative approach precludes her from seeing how Matthew's dreams share with other ancient texts a common literary form, which includes the feature of the dreamer responding to the dream. The obedience of the dreamers in Matthew's narrative is expected given the literary convention of dreams. Anderson reads Matthew's dreams in terms

²⁰Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (JSNTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 153-7.

²¹Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 157.

of the “implied reader,”²² which results in a “flat” reading of the Matthew’s narrative. I intend to read Matthew’s dreams in light of the ancient social and literary contexts of dreams, which—I believe—results in a more textured or multi-dimensional reading of Matthew.

Conclusion

This review of previous research concludes with the most notable examination of dreams in Matthew, that of Marco Frenschkowski.²³ Though Frenschkowski accepts the form-critical work of Gnuse and acknowledges the connection of the first Matthean dream narrative with a Moses typology, he is interested in interpreting the dreams of Matthew’s Gospel in light of ancient dream theories and dream interpretation. Despite many helpful and insightful observations²⁴—note his subtitle, *einige Beobachtungen*—Frenschkowski’s conclusions are mainly presented in contrast to this ancient context. First, Frenschkowski attempts say something about the Matthean community based on how the dreams in Matthew’s Gospel compare to the ancient social context of dreams. He concludes that (1) the Matthean community lacked a professional

²²The “implied reader” is equivalent to Peter Rabinowitz’s “narrative audience,” which will be discussed below under *Methodology*.

²³Frenschkowski, “Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium,” 5-47.

²⁴Particularly helpful and insightful are his examination of the Matthean dream terminology — κατ’ ὄναρ — in other Greco-Roman literature (14-21) and his specific comments on the individual dream reports and references, especially the dream of Pilate’s wife (32-34).

dream interpreter, given the omission of symbolic dreams in Matthew, and (2) dreams played no particular, spiritual importance for the Matthean community, since nothing is mentioned in the instructions for missionaries (Matt 10) nor in the ecclesiastical teachings (Matt 18).²⁵ Second, Frenschkowski concludes that the Matthean dreams are in continuity with a main feature of New Testament theology, the *Disambiguierung des Offenbarungsgeschehens*.²⁶ Although these conclusions are incredibly speculative (Matthean community) and over generalized (NT theology), Frenschkowski's investigation of the dreams in Matthew in the larger context of ancient dream theories and interpretations provides a much-needed dimension to the study of the Matthean dreams.

My research project will follow Frenschkowski's lead of examining the dreams of Matthew's Gospel in their ancient context, but I will seek to avoid a methodological problem inherent in his work. Frenschkowski does not differentiate between sources that address dreams in terms of theory and technical interpretation and sources that contain dream reports as a part of a larger narrative – e.g., histories, biographies, and novels. While the two are informed by one another, I will treat these two types of sources in two different chapters and privilege the narrative texts in interpreting the dream reports in the

²⁵Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 40-1.

²⁶Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 42-3.

Gospel of Matthew.²⁷ Moreover, my concern is not a reconstruction of the Matthean community; it is a reading Matthew's dreams as the authorial audience, to which I now turn my attention.

Methodological Considerations

As stated, the theoretical perspective guiding my dissertation is audience criticism with specific interest in what Peter Rabinowitz calls the "authorial audience."²⁸ Rabinowitz places the authorial audience on a spectrum of audiences in relation to a text. At one end of the spectrum is the "actual audience," the real flesh-and-blood readers of the text. The actual audience is the only audience "over which the author has no guaranteed control."²⁹ At the other end of the spectrum is the hypothetical "ideal narrative audience." Rabinowitz is quick to point out that this audience is ideal "from the narrator's point of view."³⁰ The ideal narrative audience comes into play only in highly ironic texts, where irony actually creates a differential in relation to the other hypothetical

²⁷The essay by Joachim Latacz, "Functionen des Traums in der antiken Literatur," in *Traum und Träumen: Traumanalysen in Wissenschaft, Religion und Kunst* (ed. Therese Wagner-Simon und Gaetano Benedetti; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 10-31, helped me recognize the importance of this differentiation. Also, his classification of the functions of dreams in ancient literature provided a basis for the structure of my dissertation (see below): *praktischen Zwecken, theoretischen Zwecken, and künstlerischen Zwecken.*

²⁸Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 126-127.

²⁹Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 126.

³⁰Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 134.

audiences: the authorial audience and the narrative audience. Though both are hypothetical constructs, it is important to distinguish between the authorial audience and the narrative audience. The authorial audience is a hypothetical audience, which is constructed based on the assumed, or *presupposed*, “beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions”³¹ that the author has about his or her readers. The authorial audience is constructed on the basis of the text in relation to the literary, social, and cultural contexts with which the author shares with his audience. The narrative audience is also a hypothetical construct, but this audience is constructed on the basis of, even “extracted from,” the text itself, as if the text was a “closed, autonomous object.”³² In other words, the narrative audience is constructed only on the basis of the text itself without regard to the larger literary and historical contexts in which the text was written. In contrast to the narrative audience, Rabinowitz further describes the authorial audience:

The [authorial audience], therefore, is not reducible to textual features but can be determined only by an examination of the interrelation between the text and the context in which the work was produced. The [authorial audience], in other words, is a *contextualized* implied reader, and studies of reading that start here have the potential to open up new questions of history, culture, and ideology.³³

³¹Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 126; cf. Rabinowitz, “Whirl without End: Audience-Oriented Criticism,” in *Contemporary Literary Theory* (ed. G. D. Atkins and L. Morrow; Amherst, Mass.: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 85.

³²Rabinowitz, “Whirl without End,” 84.

³³Rabinowitz, “Whirl without End,” 85. For another literary theorist who also attempts to reintroduce a historical perspective to critical literary studies, see Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (trans. T. Bahti; vol. 2 of *Theory*

Thus, reading a text as the authorial audience requires knowledge of the literary, social, and historical contexts in which the text was produced.

This theoretical perspective of audience can be further illustrated by placing it in the context of New Testament studies. Mark Allan Powell provides a helpful categorization and description of how modern biblical scholarship has approached its task of interpreting the Gospels.³⁴ Powell presents two models. The first model is historical-critical, which is a diachronic approach to the text with the goal of historical reconstruction. The Gospels are used as sources for some larger historical project, such as the historical Jesus, history of traditions, the history of early Christianity, communities of the evangelists, or even a compositional history of the Gospels themselves. The historical-critical method assumes a referential function of texts. The second model is narrative criticism,³⁵ which is a synchronic approach to the text with the goal of describing the narrative qualities of the text itself. Rabinowitz's narrative audience is indicative of this model. The Gospels are read only in light of the narratives that they present; the narrative world is the only "context" in which the text is interpreted.

and History of Literature, ed. W. Godzich and J. Schulte-Sasse; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), chapter 1, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory."

³⁴Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (GBS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 6-21.

³⁵I have adjusted Powell's category here. Powell uses the larger category of literary studies, which he divides into narrative criticism and reader-response criticism.

This narrative method assumes a poetic function of texts. An audience-critical approach, such as Rabinowitz's authorial audience, requires a third category, and it can be placed in the broader umbrella of reception theory (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*).³⁶ This model is characterized by both reading a text in its final form (synchronic) and understanding the text in light of the audience/readers' historical context (diachronic).³⁷ The goal of audience criticism is to understand a text in relation to the literary, social, and historical contexts of its readers, and in the case of authorial audience this is the context when the text was first produced. Thus, an audience-critical approach is a contextual reading of the Gospels and assumes a rhetorical function of texts.³⁸

Therefore, my approach to the dreams in Matthew's Gospel is an audience-critical approach, aiming to read/hear the Matthean dream reports and references in the same manner as Matthew's authorial audience.³⁹ More simply,

³⁶Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, chapter 1, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory."

³⁷See Paul de Man's introduction to Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, xiv, who points out both dimensions of "synchrony" and "diachrony" in Jauss's reception theory.

³⁸For an excellent example of an authorial audience approach to New Testament narratives, see Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke-Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu* (NovTSup 107; Leiden: Brill, 2003). See especially Chapter One, "On Reading Luke and Acts," in which Talbert also situates audience criticism in the history of New Testament interpretation and describes this approach.

³⁹For an authorial audience approach to Matthew as a whole, see Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), esp. 15-118. See also Graham N. Stanton, *A*

I attempt to answer the question, “How would the authorial audience have heard Matthew’s narration of dreams?” This question is answered by (1) understanding the social and literary contexts of dreams in the Greco-Roman world (the time and culture of the production of Matthew’s Gospel), and (2) reading Matthew’s dreams against the “horizon of expectations”⁴⁰ that these contexts imply. The assumption is that Matthew writes to be understood, and the larger social and literary conventions of his time provide the commonality with his audience upon which communication takes place.

Overview of this Study

In order to understand the beliefs, values, and expectations that an ancient audience would bring to the dreams in Matthew’s Gospel, it is important to describe both the social and literary contexts of ancient dreams. In Chapter Two, I will explore the social context of ancient dreams by examining the ancient practices and theories associated with dreams as dealt with in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian sources. The purpose of this chapter is to describe in general the values and beliefs about dreams in antiquity. Chapters Three and Four analyze the literary context of ancient dreams. The purpose of Chapter Three is to demonstrate dreams as a literary convention in ancient literature by

Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 71-76.

⁴⁰The phrase “horizon of expectations” comes from Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, esp. 22-34.

considering the form of literary dreams, the rhetoric of dreams, and the literary inventiveness of dreams. In Chapter Four, I will analyze the function of specific dream narratives from a sampling of ancient histories, biographies, and fiction. Within the social and literary context of dreams in antiquity, Chapter Five will offer a reading of the dream reports and references in Matthew's Gospel, seeking to answer this question: what meaning(s) and significance(s) would the authorial audience construct for the dreams in Matthew's narrative? Chapter Six will summarize the results of reading Matthew's dreams as authorial audience and sketch implications for further research. This dissertation also includes an appendix that considers Matthew's transfiguration (17:1-9) as a dream-vision report.

CHAPTER TWO

The Ancient, Social Context of Dreams

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in general the social context of ancient dreams and the subsequent kinds of values and beliefs an ancient audience would bring to a text that narrates dreams. This description is achieved by (1) illustrating the ancient practice of dreams and (2) surveying Greco-Roman theories and classifications of dreams.

The Practice of Dreams

The *practice of dreams* is shorthand for the practical role dreams and their interpretation played in the ancient Mediterranean world. This socio-cultural function of dreams is a feature of that aspect of Greco-Roman religion usually designated “popular religion” or “popular piety.”¹ But, as Hans-Josef Klauck

¹For those who treat this aspect of Greco-Roman religion, see Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Popular Religion* (ACLS New Series 1; New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 3-139; André-Jean Festugière, *Personal Religion Among the Greeks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 1-142; Luther H. Martin, *Hellenistic Religions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 35-57; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (*Studies of the New Testament and Its World*; trans. Brian McNeil; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 153-249; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 213-243. See also the following studies that incorporate Greco-Roman piety in their descriptions of “paganism”: Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 1-137; and Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 27-418.

advises, “It is not so easy to demarcate from other religious spheres the phenomena which these concepts are intended to identify.”² Thus, he includes in his study of popular piety in the Greco-Roman world such topics as astrology, the healing cult of Asclepius, magic, oracles, and dreams.³

Popular religion, however, was not simply about humanity’s relation to the divine. The phenomenon of popular religion in antiquity also included aspects that can be considered “scientific;” that is, ancient religion informed an understanding of the world and how that world could be manipulated or managed by humans.⁴ Popular religion was an expression of humanity’s relation both to the divine and the world, and dreams played an important role in both of these relations. To demonstrate this function of dreams, the following discussion is organized around the topics of (1) dreams and divination, (2) dreams and ancient magic, (3) dreams and Greco-Roman cults, and (4) professional dream interpreters. It should be carefully noted, however, that these categories are heuristic and that in reality they converge, overlap, and often simply represent a different dimension of the same religious phenomenon.

²Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 153.

³Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 153-249.

⁴Mary Beard, introduction to “Diviners and Divination at Rome,” by John North, in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Mary Beard and John North; London: Duckworth, 1990), 49; and Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6-7.

Dreams and Divination

A central element of Greco-Roman religion was divination (Greek *μαντική* or *μαντεία*; Latin *divinatio*). Though Cicero could define divination simply as “the foresight and knowledge of future events,”⁵ the assumptions and beliefs underlying divination were that the gods granted this knowledge or insight through various signs. This conviction is articulated by Xenophon in reference to Socrates’s respect for the gods:

Those who believe in divination (*μαντικήν*) consult birds and prophetic sayings (*φήμαις*) and portents (*σύμβολα*) and sacrifices. For seekers of divination suppose not that the birds or chance encounters know what is advantageous (*τὰ συμφέροντα*), but that the gods signal (*σημαίνειν*) for them what is advantageous through them; and Socrates held the same.⁶

Xenophon gives further expression of this sentiment in his *Symposium* through the character Hermogenes:

[B]oth Greeks and barbarians believe that the gods know everything both present and to come; at any rate, all cities and all races ask the gods, by the diviner's art (*διὰ μαντικῆς*), for advice as to what to do and what to avoid. . . . Well, these gods, omniscient and omnipotent, feel so friendly toward me that their watchfulness over me never lets me out of their ken night or day, no matter where I am going or what business I have in view. They know the results also that will follow any act; and so they send to me as messengers omens of sounds (*φήμας*), dreams (*ἐνύπνια*), and birds, and thus indicate (*σημαίνουσιν*) what I ought to do and what I ought not to do. And when I do their bidding, I never regret it; on the other hand, I have before now disregarded them and have been punished for it.⁷

⁵Cicero, *Div.* 1.1 (Falconer, LCL).

⁶Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.3 (modified trans. of Bonnette; text Smith); see also Xenophon, *Apol.* 11-14.

⁷Xenophon, *Sym.* 4.48 (Todd, LCL); see also Xenophon, *Eq. mag.* 9.9.

As indicated by Xenophon, the various expressions of divination include dreams. In Plutarch's *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*, dreams are referred to as the "most ancient and respected form of divination."⁸ This assessment is mythically portrayed by Aeschylus, who presents Prometheus as the one who established the "many ways of divination" (τρόπους πολλοὺς μανικῆς), the first of which was the interpretation of dreams (κᾶκπρινα πρῶτος ἐξ ὄνειράτων ἃ χρῆ ὕπαρ γενέσθαι).⁹ Euripides credits the goddess Earth (Χθών) with having invented dream divination in response to Apollo's take over of the Pythian oracle.¹⁰ This situation seems to be reflected in the tradition passed on by Pausanias: "Except those whom they say Apollo inspired of old, none of the seers (οὐδεις μάντεών) uttered oracles, but they were good at explaining dreams (ονείρατα ἐξηγήσασθαι) and interpreting the flights of birds and the entrails of victims."¹¹

⁸Plutarch, *Sept. sap. conv.* 159a (Babbitt, LCL). Cf. Tertullian, *De anima* 46.11, who states that Epicharmus and Philochorus the Athenian "assigned the very highest place among divinations to dreams" (*ANF* 3:225).

⁹Aeschylus, *Prom.* 484-485.

¹⁰Euripides, *Iph. Taur.* 1259-68. The story continues, of course, with Apollo gaining control over dream divination and thus becoming the patron god of divination. Cf. the magical text of *PGM* I. 327-331 (Betz; text Preisendanz): "And when [Apollo] comes, ask him what you wish, about the art of prophecy (περὶ μαντείας), about divination with epic verses, about the sending dreams (περὶ ὄνειροπομπείας), about obtaining revelations in dreams (περὶ ὄνειροαιτησίας), about interpretation of dreams (περὶ ὄνειροκριτιᾶς), about causing disease, about everything that is part of magical knowledge."

¹¹Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.34.4 (Jones and Ormerod, LCL).

In addition to these mythical and legendary accounts, the conception of dreams as a form of divination can be illustrated further by two other examples. First, the diviner¹² Artemidorus places the production of his handbook on dream interpretation, *Onirocritica*, in the larger practice of divination. He states that one of the purposes of writing his *Onirocritica* is to “join battle against those who are trying to do away with divination in general or its various aspects, bringing to bear my own experience and the proof furnished by the fulfillment of actual dreams, which could prove capable of holding its ground against all comers.”¹³ Artemidorus is acutely aware of how divination is being undermined and discredited by less respectable practitioners of divination, such as those who divine by “dice, from cheese, from sieves, from forms and figures, from palms, from dishes, and from necromancy.”¹⁴ For Artemidorus the only true forms of divination come from “utterances of sacrificers, bird augurs, astrologers, observers of strange phenomena (τερατοσκόπων), dream interpreters (ὄνειροκριτῶν) and soothsayers who examine livers.”¹⁵ Thus, for Artemidorus

¹²Though Artemidorus is known primarily as a professional dream interpreter, tradition has it that he also wrote another book on the general practice of divination; see Robert J. White, introduction to *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Artemidorus (trans. Robert J. White; Noyes Classical Studies; Park Ridge, New Jersey: Noyes Press, 1975), 1.

¹³Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.praef (White).

¹⁴Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.69 (White).

¹⁵Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.69 (White; text Pack).

his handbook on dream interpretation represented a true expression of divination and a formidable defense against an increasing criticism of divinatory practices.

The other example that situates the phenomenon of dreams within Greco-Roman divination is Cicero's *De divinatione*.¹⁶ Cicero's interlocutor Quintus divides divination into two kinds (*genera*), natural and artificial.¹⁷ Artificial divination refers to those divinatory practices that require the art or skill of interpretation and discernment. These forms of divination include, for example, the inspection of entrails, astrology, augury, and the general interpretation of omens. Quintus explains that artificial divination is based on "conjecture, or on deduction from events previously observed and recorded."¹⁸ Natural divination, on the other hand, is more immediate and derives from the soul's natural

¹⁶*De divinatione* is structured into two books and presented as a dialogue or debate between himself and his brother Quintus. Book 1 represents Quintus's argument for divination, which in essence is a Stoic position. Book 2 is Cicero's response, which is a critique and rejection of divination; this critique will be considered in part 2 of this chapter, "Dream Classifications and Theories."

It is interesting to note that scholars are beginning to question whether Cicero's position is an outright rejection of divination; see Mary Beard, "Cicero and Divination: The Formation of a Latin Discourse," *JRS* 76 (1986): 33-46; Malcolm Schofield, "Cicero for and against Divination," *JRS* 76 (1986): 47-65; and Susanne William Rasmussen, "Cicero's stand on Prodigies. A Non-existent Dilemma?," in *Divination and Portents in the Roman World* (ed. Robin Lorsch Wildfang and Jacob Isager; Odense University Classical Studies 21; Odense University Press, 2000), 9-24.

¹⁷Cicero, *Div.* 1.11-12; cf. 1.70-72.

¹⁸Cicero, *Div.* 1.72 (Falconer, LCL).

connection with the “divine soul” that orders the cosmos. In another passage, Quintus describes natural divination in this way: “Therefore the human soul has an inherent power of presaging or of foreknowing infused into it from without, and made a part of it by the will of God.”¹⁹ It is in natural divination that Quintus places dreams, along with those oracles uttered under divine inspiration or ecstasy.

In demonstrating the divinatory power of dreams, Quintus marshals a variety of examples from literature, history, and personal experience.²⁰ The following provides a sampling of his illustrations. First, Quintus recounts the legend about the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris.²¹ It is said that Phalaris’ mother dreamed that the statue of Mercury in her house poured blood from a bowl in its right hand, and the blood completely covered the floor of the house. Quintus confirms the consensus that the dream of Phalaris’ mother dream rightly portended the extreme cruelty of her son. Another illustration of dream divination comes from the military campaign of Hannibal.²² After his occupation of the city of Lacinium, Hannibal wanted to take with him one of the golden columns of the temple of Juno. On the night before leaving, the goddess Juno appeared to Hannibal in a dream and warned him against taking the golden

¹⁹Cicero, *Div.* 1.66. (Falconer, LCL).

²⁰Cicero, *Div.* 1.39–71.

²¹Cicero, *Div.* 1.46.

²²Cicero, *Div.* 1.48-49.

column, threatening in turn to take away the vision of his good eye. Hannibal heeded the dream and did not carry off the temple column. Finally, Quintus relates his own dream concerning Cicero.²³ While serving as the proconsul of Asia, Quintus dreamed that Cicero was riding a horse toward a large river. Suddenly Cicero and the horse plunged into the river disappearing from sight. A moment later, however, Cicero reemerges still on the horse and reaches the opposite side of the river “with a cheerful countenance.”²⁴ Because the meaning of the dream was not readily apparent, Quintus consulted expert dream interpreters, who accurately predicted Cicero’s subsequent banishment from Rome and his eventual return.²⁵

In light of these examples, a couple of brief observations about dream divination are offered. First, not all divinatory dreams are about foretelling the future. Hannibal’s dream represents direct command or warning by the deity. Much of the inscriptional evidence of dreams in the ancient Mediterranean world reflects this dimension of dream divination.²⁶ Second, despite Quintus’ sharp delineation between natural and artificial divination, dream divination blurs this distinction. Quintus argues that dreams are a type of natural divination, but

²³Cicero, *Div.* 1.58.

²⁴Cicero, *Div.* 1.58 (Falconer, LCL).

²⁵See Falconer’s note (LCL), p. 288, n. 2.

²⁶See Gil H. Renberg. “‘Commanded By the Gods’: An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2003).

some dreams – like his own of Cicero – require the help of expert diviners who practice the art of dream interpretation.²⁷ Artemidorus' *Onirocritica* demonstrates fully this artificial quality of dream divination. In an empirical, scientific-like manner, Artemidorus carefully builds upon the respected works of former dream interpreters, incorporates the many insights of contemporary interpreters whom he has personally interviewed, and relies upon his own experiences.²⁸ It is a deductive endeavor with the purpose of perfecting the skill of dream interpretation. Thus, whether knowledge about the future or about the will of the gods it was believed that dreams were one means of divine communication, and this form of divination may or may not require the art of interpretation.

The Jewish scriptures reflect this divinatory understanding of dreams and present dreams as an accepted form of divination in Israel's religious heritage.²⁹ In the stories of the ancestors, God often communicates, guides, and protects through dreams: Abimelech's dream (Gen 20:3-7), Jacob's dreams (Gen 28:10-22;

²⁷In another example of dream divination, Quintus relates how the mother of Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, consulted professional diviners in Sicily called the "Galeotae" about the meaning of her dream; Cicero, *Div.* 1.39.

²⁸Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.praef. See also Claes Blum, *Studies in the Dream-Book of Artemidorus* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1939), 1-52; White, introduction to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 6-10; and S. R. F. Price, "The Future of Dreams: From Freud to Artemidorus," *Past and Present* 113 (1986): 24-28.

²⁹For a discussion of divination and ancient Israel, see Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 229-305.

31:10-13), Laban's dream (Gen 31:24), and Joseph, who not only receives dreams but also interprets them (Gen 37:5-10; 40–42). In Numbers 12:6-8, it is explained that God communicates to prophets through visions and dreams, though these usual forms of communication are not necessary with Moses, to whom God speaks face to face. The prophet-judge Samuel hears God's calling in a dream at Shiloh (1 Sam 3:1-21). After Samuel dies king Saul inquires of the Lord before a battle, "but the Lord did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or prophets" (1 Sam 28:6; NRSV). The text assumes that these are customary forms of divine communication, but when they prove ineffective, which is probably intended to underscore God's rejection of Saul,³⁰ Saul then seeks forms of divination that are prohibited.³¹ Gideon, on the other hand, receives divine counsel through a dream before his battle with the Midianites and consequently defeats his enemy (Judg 7:9-16). The prophet Joel foretells of a renewed community that will experience again God's presence through prophecy, dreams, and visions (2:28). Daniel's ability to interpret dreams and visions is a gift from God (1:17); he also is the recipient of divine dreams and visions (chs. 7–12). In general, the Jewish scriptures present dreams as a legitimate form of divine communication.

³⁰Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 265.

³¹Cf. Deut 18:9-14, where an extended list of forbidden forms of divination is given, but it does not include dream divination.

The Jewish scriptures are critical of dream divination, however, when the practice compromises Israel's monotheistic faith. Prophecy and dreams are paired in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, but the passage warns against heeding the counsel of "prophets or those who divine by dreams" if their message leads the people to serve other gods. Jeremiah speaks against prophets whose dreams "make my people forget my name" (23:23-32; cf. 29:8-9) and so includes dreams in the list of forbidden forms of divination (27:9). Zechariah criticizes the leaders of Judah because they have allowed the teraphim, diviners, and dreamers to practice their divination in isolation from the Lord (10:1-3). These negative assessments of dream divination are related to a violation of monotheism. Their critique is leveled against those who misuse dream divination, not against dreams *per se* as a means of divine communication.³²

This section has attempted to demonstrate in general terms the ancient understanding that dreams and their interpretation were one form of divination. The various practices of dreams described in the following sections assume this basic belief about dreams. Moreover, the Jewish and Christian traditions follow the precedent of their scriptures: dreams are accepted as a legitimate form of divine communication, but suspicion and criticism may arise when dream

³²Scott Noegel, "Dreams and Dream Interpreters in Mesopotamia and in the Hebrew Bible [Old Testament]," in *Dreams: A Reader on Religious, Cultural, and Psychological Dimensions of Dreaming* (ed. Kelly Bulkeley; New York: PALGRAVE, 2001), 59-60.

divination is practiced in a pagan or heterodox context. Examples of such criticisms, where applicable, will be offered in the following sections.

Dreams and Ancient Magic

As a particular expression of religion in the Greco-Roman world and as a specific aspect of divination,³³ ancient magic was also associated with the practice of dreams. This association is exhibited most clearly in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, which contain two types of dream rituals or spells: (1) the dream-request ritual (ὄνειραιτητά) and (2) the dream-sending ritual (ὄνειροπομός, ὄνειροπομμία). In the former ritual, the practitioner conjures revelatory dreams for him or herself; in the latter one, the practitioner invokes dreams to appear to another person for some specified task. Though a few magical rituals are general

³³Unlike scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, modern scholarship recognizes that magic in its ancient context is not antithetical to religion but represents one end of a spectrum of religious practices. See Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Religion in the First Christian Centuries; London: Routledge, 2001), 1-8; Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 1-9; Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 215-18; Hans Dieter Betz, "Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 244-259; Robert L. Fowler, "Greek Magic, Greek Religion," in *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (ed. Richard Buxton; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 317-343; David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.1:1510-1516.

spells and claim the ability to do both,³⁴ dream rituals are for the most part specifically designed for either requesting a dream or sending a dream.

The primary purpose of dream-request rituals is the revelation of some knowledge, information, or advice. Consider the following example:

Request for a dream oracle (ὄνειρακτητά), a request which is always used. Formula to be spoken to the day lamp: “NAIENCHRĒ NAIENCHRĒ, mother of fire and water, you are the one who rises before, ARCHENTECHTHA; reveal to me concerning the NN matter. If yes, show me a plant and water, but if not, fire and iron, immediately, immediately.”³⁵

The practitioner of this magical ritual presumably would need advice or information that is easily answered by “yes” or “no.” It is not certain whether the practitioner would receive his or her answer through a symbolic dream, in which the symbols of “yes” (plant/water) or “no” (fire/iron) would somehow be played out, or by the appearance of the goddess (“mother of fire and water”), whereby she appears in a form corresponding to the appropriate answer.³⁶

Most of the dream-request rituals are much more elaborate and do not restrict the requested information to a simple “yes” or “no” but leave it open-

³⁴For example, *PGM IV. 2442-2621* (Betz): “It inflicts sickness excellently and destroys powerfully, sends dreams beautifully, accomplishes dream revelations marvelously and in its many demonstrations has been marveled at for having no failure in these matters” (lines 2443-6). See also, *PGM IV. 2006-2125* (lines 2076-81).

³⁵*PGM VII. 250-254* (Betz).

³⁶Cf. also *PGM XXIIb. 27-31* (Betz): “[If] the petition I have made is appropriate, [show] me water and a grove; if otherwise, show me water and a stone”; and *XXIIb. 32-35* (Betz): “If this matter has been granted to me, show me a courtesan; otherwise, a soldier.”

ended with the formulaic “reveal to me concerning the NN matter.”³⁷ The magical ritual entitled “Dream-Request from Besas” is a case in point.³⁸ The ritual first calls for the practitioner to draw a picture of the god Besa, which is found “in the beginning of the book.”³⁹ The figure is to be drawn presumably on the hand⁴⁰ with ink made from the “blood of a white dove, likewise of a crow, also sap of the mulberry, juice of single-stemmed wormwood, cinnabar, and rainwater.”⁴¹ After the drawing of Besa, the practitioner then wraps his or her hand with a black cloth of Isis. The prayer-formula, which is quite lengthy, is to be spoken to a lamp and ends with petition, where the specific request is to be inserted: “Come, lord, reveal to me concerning the NN matter, without deceit, without treachery, immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly.”⁴²

³⁷See *PGM* IV. 2501-2505; IV. 3172-3208 (line 3207); VII. 222-249 (line 247); VII. 359-369 (line 369); VII. 478-490 (line 479); VII. 703-726 (line 714); VII. 740-755 (line 744); VII. 795-854 (line 36; cf. 841); VII. 1009-1016 (line 1015); XII. 144-152 (line 152).

³⁸*PGM* VII. 222-249. Cf. the parallel dream-request ritual VIII. 64-110.

³⁹Line 249 (Betz). The picture is missing from the papyri, but the parallel spell VIII. 64-110 provides a description of the Besa figure to be drawn: “A naked man, standing, having a diadem on his head, and in his right hand a sword that by means of a bent [arm] rests on his neck, and in the left hand a wand” (lines 105-109 [Betz]).

⁴⁰Once again, based on *PGM* VIII. 64-110.

⁴¹Lines 223-5 (Betz).

⁴²Lines 247-8 (Betz).

The deities petitioned by the dream-request rituals vary greatly. We find Hermes – the classical Homeric dream-sender – and the Greco-Egyptian oracle god Besa addressed in some rituals,⁴³ but for the most part these dream-request rituals follow the magical custom of addressing the divine with many names, particularly in the manner of the *voces magicae*. For example, the spoken prayer-formula of *PGM VII. 359-369* states,

SACHNOUNE PAËMALIGOTËRËËNCH, the one who shakes, who thunders, who has swallowed the serpent, surrounds the moon, and hour by hour raises the disk of the sun, 'CHTHETHÏNÏ' is your name. I ask you, lords of the gods, SËTH CHRËPS: reveal to me concerning the things I wish.⁴⁴

It should also be noted that dream-request rituals are sometime connected with necromancy, as in the case of *PGM IV. 2006-2125*.

Although the dream-request rituals may vary in their divine addressees and their specific instructions and ceremonial materials, there are some recurring features found in these magical spells. First, many of the dream-request rituals include the use of a lamp. In most cases, the prayer-formula is to be spoken to a lamp.⁴⁵ The prayer-formula may be recited seven times,⁴⁶ or in one case it is

⁴³For Hermes, see *PGM V. 370-446*; *VII. 664-685*; *XVIIb. 1-23*. For Bes (or Besa, Besas), see *PGM VII. 222-49*; *VIII. 64-110*. Cf. also the graffito inscription that describes Bes as the “wholly truthful dream-giver and oracle-giver” (Renberg, Test. No. 21).

⁴⁴Lines 365-9 (Betz).

⁴⁵*PGM IV. 3172-3208*; *VII. 222-249*; *VII. 250-254*; *VII. 359-569*; *VII. 664-685*; *XXIIb. 27-31*; and *XXIIb. 32-35*.

⁴⁶*PGM IV. 3172-3208*; *VII. 359-369*; *VII. 664-685*.

simply repeated until “until [the lamp] is extinguished.”⁴⁷ In another dream-request ritual, the prayer-formula is written on papyrus and then placed under the lamp. The most detailed dream-request ritual utilizing a lamp is *PGM IV. 3172-3208*.⁴⁸ The lamp cannot be painted red and is to be filled with pure olive oil. While the lamp is facing east, the practitioner recites the prescribed prayer seven times. Before going to sleep, the practitioner places the lamp on a tripod made of reeds, which has undergone its own ritualistic construction.⁴⁹ The use of lamp magic is not unique to dream-request rituals, but its prominent use in these spells is no doubt related to the shared nocturnal existence of dreams and lamps.⁵⁰

Another frequent element found in the dream-request rituals is the placing of an item on or beside the head of the practitioner as he or she sleeps. The most common item is some type of branch as in *PGM IV. 3172-3208*, which simply directs, “Let the head of the practitioner be crowned with olive branches.”⁵¹ Sometimes the request or the divine names are written on the leaves

⁴⁷*PGM XXIIb. 27-31* (Betz).

⁴⁸Cf. the use of the lamp in the dream-sending ritual *PGM XII. 121-143*.

⁴⁹Lines 3173-3186, 3196-3197.

⁵⁰Samson Eitrem, “Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual,” in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 176.

⁵¹Line 3198 (Betz).

of the branch⁵² or a strip on linen, which is then wrapped around the branch.⁵³ One dream-request ritual places the prayer-formula, which has been written on tin, under the pillow of the practitioner.⁵⁴ An explanation of this association of the dream-request ritual and the head is the ancient understanding that the dream figure often stands beside or above the head of the dreamer.⁵⁵ This concept is ritually acted out in *PGM V. 370-446*. In this magical ritual, a doll-like figure of Hermes is to be fashioned out of the prescribed ingredients.⁵⁶ The practitioner, then, is to “let it rest beside your head, and go to sleep after saying the spell without giving an answer to anyone.”⁵⁷

A third common feature of the dream-request rituals is the directive for purity. In several of these magical spells, the practitioner is instructed to be in a state of purity before he or she goes to sleep, such as “when you are about to go

⁵²*PGM VII. 1009-1016* (lines 1015-16); *VII. 795-845* (lines 801-4, 823-7, 843-5).

⁵³*PGM VII. 664-85* (lines 664-6).

⁵⁴*PGM VII. 740-55*. Cf. also *PGM VII. 478-490*, which calls for a strip of tin that has the names of the deities to be placed around the neck of the practitioner.

⁵⁵See John S. Hanson, “Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 23.2: 1410. Consider also the title of Francis Flannery-Dailey’s study of dreams in antiquity: “Standing at the Head of Dreamers’: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2000).

⁵⁶Cf. the dream-sending rituals *PGM IV. 1716-1870* and *VII. 862-918*, which also contain the use of dolls.

⁵⁷ Lines 498-9.

to sleep, being pure in every respect” (καθάρως ἀπὸ παντός)⁵⁸ and “go to sleep in a pure condition” (ἀγνὸς ὦν κοιμῶ).⁵⁹ One ritual calls for the practitioner to be in a state of purity for three days before the sleep of the dream revelation,⁶⁰ while another text commands that both the practitioner and the place of sleeping be pure.⁶¹ How this purity is attained is not specified, though one dream-request ritual calls for the practitioner to cover him or herself with olive oil before sleeping⁶² and another prescribes the burning of incense before lying down.⁶³ This concern and custom of purity reflected in dream-request rituals parallels, and is most likely influenced by, the incubation rites of various Greco-Roman cults. For example, in his ancient travelogue⁶⁴ *Description of Greece*, Pausanias relates the tradition about incubation at the temple of Amphairaus in Oropus:

One who has come to consult Amphairaus is wont first to purify himself (καθήρασθαι). The mode of purification (καθάρσιον) is to sacrifice to the

⁵⁸PGM VII. 359-369 (line 363) (Betz; text Preisendanz).

⁵⁹PGM VII. 703-726 (line 725) (Betz; text Preisendanz).

⁶⁰PGM VII. 740-755 (line 749).

⁶¹PGM VII. 795-845 (lines 843-4).

⁶²PGM XII. 190-192.

⁶³PGM V. 370-446.

⁶⁴The travelogue was actually a type of ancient literature known as periegetic literature. For comments and bibliography, see Antony J. S. Spawforth, “tourism,” *OCD* 1535.

god, and they sacrifice not only to him but also to all those whose names are on the altar.⁶⁵

Lastly, the prayer-formulas of a couple of the dream-request rituals stipulate or insist that the information or revelation given through the dream be truthful and comprehensible. We have already quoted the prayer-formula ending of *PGM VII. 222-249*, which seeks a revelation “without deceit, without treachery” (ἀψεύστως, ἀσκανδαλίστως).⁶⁶ The prayer-formula of *PGM VII. 795-845* emphasizes this concern with repetitive petitions: “Hence I call upon you all that you may come quickly in this night, and reveal to me clearly (σαφῶς) and firmly (βεβαίως), concerning those matters I desire;”⁶⁷ and “Hence, I call upon you in this night, and you may reveal all things to me through dreams with accuracy (κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ἐπ’ ἀκριβείας).”⁶⁸ Corresponding to these ritual texts is a magical amulet, used no doubt in a dream-request ritual, that has the inscription, “Counsel me this night in truth [and] with memory” (ἐπ’ ἀληθεία μετὰ μνήμης).⁶⁹ These concerns for truthfulness and recollection reflect some ancient, customary problems with

⁶⁵Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.34.5 (Jones and Ormerod, LCL). Cf. also the account of incubation given by Aristophanes, *Plut.* 653-747, which includes, “we first led him down to the sea to purify him.” The practice of incubation will be discussed below in connection with dreams and Greco-Roman cults.

⁶⁶Line 246 (Betz; text Preisendanz).

⁶⁷Lines 834-6 (Betz; text Preisendanz).

⁶⁸Lines 841-2 (Betz; text Preisendanz).

⁶⁹*IG XIV 2413, 16* (text Renberg, Test. No. 30).

dream divination. First, dreams could prove to be deceptive or simply insignificant. A passage from Herodotus provides a helpful illustration.⁷⁰ The Persian king Xerxes has a dream that advises him to make war against the Greeks. Xerxes' counselor Artabanus cautions the king that some dreams are simply products of the day's thoughts and concerns (i.e., insignificant, non-divinatory). Artabanus, however, has the same dream and is therefore convinced of its divine origin. Xerxes leads a campaign against the Greeks only to be defeated. The dream proves to be deceptive, an instance reminiscent of the "lying dream" of Agamemnon in the *Iliad*.⁷¹ Secondly, the common experience of dreams attests that one can awaken from sleep knowing or sensing that he or she experienced a dream, but the dream is vague or simply cannot be remembered. This common occurrence is actually used by Cicero in his argument against dream divination.⁷² These dream-request rituals seek to prevent such potential impediments with the added petitionary qualifiers.

Whereas the purpose of dream-request rituals is limited to revelation, the functions of dream-sending rituals include revelation, imprecation, and erotic attraction. The dream-sending ritual entitled "Zminis of Tentyra's spell for sending dreams"⁷³ is an example of sending a dream for the purpose of

⁷⁰Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.12.

⁷¹Homer, *Il.* 1.1-41.

⁷² Cicero, *Div.* 2.124.

⁷³PGM XII. 121-143.

revelation. In this spell the many-named deity is petitioned “to go to him, NN, this very hour, this very night, and to tell him in a dream such-and-such.”⁷⁴ The magical ritual *PGM IV. 2622-2707* is an example of an imprecatory spell, which is intended to cause harm or injury to another person whether physically or psychologically. One means of this harmful activity is dreams,⁷⁵ although the exact manner of how dreams effect the harm is uncertain – nightmare, menacing omen, or the appearance and retributive action of the deity? Interestingly, the ritual also includes a protective charm for the practitioner, so that he or she will be guarded “from every daimon of the air on the earth and under the earth, and from every angel and phantom and ghostly visitation and enchantment.”⁷⁶ Thus, this protective charm ironically guards against the very kind of imprecatory magic being administered by the spell.⁷⁷

The most common purpose for dream-sending rituals is to attract a lover.⁷⁸ The love-attracting ritual *PGM IV. 1716-1870*, for example, includes as an addendum the procedure for using an Eros doll that will serve as an “assistant

⁷⁴Lines 139-40 (Betz); cf. lines 131-2, 135-7.

⁷⁵Lines 2624-5.

⁷⁶Lines 2699-2701.

⁷⁷If we include this protective charm as a function of dream magic, then dreams participate in each of the functional types of magic set forth by Theodor Hopfner: protective, imprecatory, erotic, and revelatory. *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber* (2 vols.; reprint of Leipzig: H. Haessel, 1921; Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1974).

⁷⁸*PGM IV. 1716-1870; VII. 407-410; VII. 862-918.*

and supporter and sender of dreams.”⁷⁹ The Eros doll will send dreams that will accomplish the plan of the practitioner: “Turn the ‘soul’ of her NN to me NN, so that she may love me, so that she may feel passion for me, so that she may give me what is in her power.”⁸⁰ In *PGM VII. 862-918*, the sending of dreams is intended to bring the desired lover to the practitioner’s bedroom that very night; it does not matter whether her coming is prompted by a frightful dream or an erotic dream.⁸¹ One dream-sending ritual, which presumably functions for erotic attraction, allows the practitioner to send himself in a dream: “If you wish to appear to someone at night in dreams (ὄνειροις), say . . . : ‘CHEIAMŌPSEI ERPEBŌTH, let her, NN, whom NN bore, see me in her dreams (ὑπνοίς), immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly.”⁸²

Dream-sending rituals are less represented in the *Greek Magical Papyri* than dream-request rituals, and therefore it is more difficult to identify common elements among the dream-sending rituals. Their lack of common elements, however, is more likely related to their multiplicity of functions—revelation, imprecation, and erotic attraction. The dream-sending rituals do share some

⁷⁹Line 1850 (Betz). Cf. the dream-request ritual *PGM VII. 478-490*, where Eros is called upon for general revelation.

⁸⁰Lines 1807-9 (Betz).

⁸¹Lines 887-9 (Betz). For more discussion of the relationship between eroticism, dreams, and magic, see John J. Winkler, “The Constraints of Eros,” in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 214-243, esp. 224-230.

⁸²*PGM VII. 407-410* (Betz; text Preisendanz).

elements with dream-request rituals, and I have identified those commonalities in footnotes.

There is one other feature of dream magic that has not been noted: necromancy. There are two magical rituals in the *Greek Magical Papyri* that utilize dreams and necromancy, though both spells are attraction spells and are associated with a certain Pityis;⁸³ and so they may simply represent parallel versions of the same spell. *PGM IV. 1928-2005* is a general spell of attraction that conjures a dead spirit to serve “as helper and avenger for whatever business I crave from him.”⁸⁴ In the prayer-formula, the practitioner requests the deity to send the dead spirit at night so that the dead spirit may “tell me whatever my mind designs”⁸⁵ and “reveal to me the what and whence, whereby he now can render me his service.”⁸⁶ Thus, the initial encounter between the practitioner and dead spirit takes place via a dream, though the means of the dead spirit’s service is unspecified.

⁸³*PGM IV. 1928-2005; IV. 2006-2125.*

⁸⁴Line 1954 (Betz).

⁸⁵Line 1971 (Betz).

⁸⁶Lines 1977-8 (Betz).

Having considered dream magic as expressed in the *Greek Magical Papyri*, we now turn to consider whether there is evidence of Jewish and Christian dream magic.⁸⁷

The *Greek Magical Papyri* finds something of a counterpart in the Jewish magic book *Sepher Ha-Razim*. The cosmological structure of the book dates from the late 3rd to early 4th century CE, but the magical rituals that are arranged in this structure represent earlier material and are similar in style and content to *PGM* spells.⁸⁸ There is only one ritual that is connected with dreams, however, and it has a revelatory function.⁸⁹ But unlike the *PGM* rituals that seek a revelation via dreams, this ritual is designed to obtain a revelation for the purpose of interpreting the dreams of others. The spell prescribes rites of purity, such as wearing a new cloak, fasting, and burning incense of myrrh and frankincense. The purity rites are followed by a prayer-formula that addresses the forty four angels who are “in charge of dreaming” and includes the request, “make known

⁸⁷Despite the strong objection to magic in the biblical tradition and patristic literature, Jewish and Christian religious practices included elements that are considered magical. For helpful discussions and bibliographies, see Paul S. Alexander, “Incantations and Books of Magic,” in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, by Emil Schürer (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 3:342-79; and David E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 23.1:1507-1557.

⁸⁸Michael A. Morgan, introduction to *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (trans. Michael A. Morgan; SBLTT 25; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 8-11.

⁸⁹*Sepher Ha-Razim* 2:209-240 (Morgan, 40-42).

to me what is in the heart of N son of N and what is his desire, and what is the interpretation of his dream and what is his thought.”⁹⁰ On the third night, the requested revelation is made known by a vision of a pillar of fire and a cloud in the image of a man. Thus, this revelatory ritual, though not conjuring or sending a dream, petitions angels as dream messengers for the purpose of interpreting dreams.

The magic ritual *PGM VII. 1009-1016* also addresses traditionally Jewish angels and assumes their function as dream messengers. The spell is entitled “Dream-divination” and includes the following prayer-formula:

I call upon [you], Sabaoth, Michael, Raphael and you, [powerful archangel] Gabriel, do not [simply] pass by me [as you bring visions], but let one of you enter and reveal [to me] concerning the NN matter, AIAI ACHĒNĒ IAŌ.”

It should be carefully noted that *Greek Magical Papyri* represent the highly syncretistic character of Greco-Roman Egypt, and so it remains uncertain whether or not this ritual originated in a Jewish context.⁹¹ But this ritual does have affinities with the *Sepher Ha-Razim* spell in that both are elaborate magical spells that presume the association of traditional Jewish angels with dreams.⁹²

⁹⁰*Sepher Ha-Razim* 2:229-30 (Morgan, 42).

⁹¹Hans Dieter Betz, “Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri,” in *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (ed. Hans Dieter Betz; 2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xlv-xxviii.

⁹²For a discussion of dreams and angels, see Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 59-65.

The Dead Sea scroll 4Q560 should be mentioned also, though it is badly fragmented and its significance for dream magic is based on emendation.⁹³ The text is an incantation formula intended to ward off various demons or evil spirits, particularly in relation to childbirth, sickness, sleep, and possibly the security of possessions. The line associated with dream magic is as follows: “. . . and forbidden to disturb by night in dreams or by day in sleep, the male Shrine-spirit and the female Shrine-spirit, breacher-demons of.”⁹⁴ Though the term “sleep” is intact, Penney and Wise emend the text to include dreams. Their emendation is convincingly based on third to sixth century Aramaic (Babylonian) incantation bowls and amulets that contain parallels to 4Q560 including charms against the visitation of demons in dreams. The emendation also is informed by the widespread belief, both Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman, that dreams were a means of demonic harm.⁹⁵ As Penney and Wise state, “4Q560 is therefore an important witness to the development of magical traditions in the Greco-Roman world generally, and among Second Temple Jews specifically.”⁹⁶

In addition to these Jewish magical texts, there are some instances in Jewish literature where revelatory dreams and visions are obtained as a result of

⁹³This discussion of 4Q560 is based on Douglas L. Penney and Michael O. Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran (4Q560),” *JBL* 113 (1994): 627-650.

⁹⁴4Q560 I, 5 (Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 632).

⁹⁵See above discussion of *PGM* IV. 2622-2707. See also references listed in Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 642, nn. 65 and 67.

⁹⁶Penney and Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub,” 649.

prayer and/or fasting and so can be considered an expression of dream magic. Daniel is the recipient of dreams and visions,⁹⁷ some of which were acquired through “prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.”⁹⁸ The dreams and visions described in *4 Ezra* are often accompanied by prayer and/or fasting.⁹⁹ The third dream-vision of *4 Ezra* is especially interesting in that an angel gives Ezra instructions as to how to receive the next vision:

But if you will let seven days more pass – do not fast during them, however; but go into a field of flowers where no house has been built, and eat only of the flowers of the field, and taste no meat and drink no wine, but eat only flowers, and pray to the Most High continually – then I will come and talk to you.¹⁰⁰

The dream-visions of Enoch are preceded by his recitation of the Watcher’s memorial prayer and petitions.¹⁰¹ Though these texts lack the elaborate rituals associated with the dream magic of the *Greek Magical Papyri*, they do present an association of religious acts (prayer and fasting) with the reception of dreams,

⁹⁷Though the discussion thus far has concentrated on dreams, it should be noted that in antiquity dreams and waking visions were understood as substantially the same: One could receive a vision while asleep or awake. The similarity of dreams and visions will be further discussed and argued in chapter four.

⁹⁸Dan 9:3 (NRSV); cf. also 10:2-3.

⁹⁹*4 Ezra* 3:1-3ff; 5:20-22ff; and 6:35-37ff.

¹⁰⁰*4 Ezra* 9:23-25 (Metzger, *OTP*). For a fascinating review of the association of narcotic flowers, sleep, and dreams in antiquity, see Flannery-Dailey, “Standing at the Heads of Dreamers,” 217-18.

¹⁰¹*En.* 13:7-8.

which in the broader Greco-Roman context can be considered an aspect of dream magic.

The widespread practice of dream magic in the Greco-Roman world is also attested, and sharply criticized, in Christian apologetics and polemics. As a part of his argument for the immortality of the soul and resurrection, Justin Martyr asks his pagan readers to consider the various practices of divination including “sent-dreams and [daemon]-attendants that are summoned by the *magoi*” (οἱ λεγόμενοι παρὰ τοῖς μάγοις ὄνειροπομποὶ καὶ πάρεδροι).¹⁰² Tertullian characterizes pagan diviners as magicians who practice necromancy, perform deceptive miracles, and “put dreams into people's minds by the power of the angels and demons whose aid they have invited.”¹⁰³ Irenaeus describes the practices of certain heresies in terms of magic. The followers of Simon Magus are said to practice the magical arts of exorcisms, incantations, love-charms, spells, attendants (*paredri*), and sent-dreams (*oniropompi*).¹⁰⁴ Carpocrates are described in similar terms; they perform incantations, love-charms, attendants (*paredri*), and sent-dreams (*oniropompi*).¹⁰⁵ As the *Greek Magical Papyri*

¹⁰²Justin, 1 *Apol.* 18.3 (text Marcovich). For the role of daemon-attendants in dream magic, see Eitrem, “Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual,” 180-1.

¹⁰³Tertullian, *Apol.* 23 (ANF 3:37).

¹⁰⁴Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.23.4.

¹⁰⁵Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.25.3.

demonstrate, a common feature of Greco-Roman magic includes sent-dreams, which can utilize attendants and facilitate love charms.

Eitrem states that such disparaging comments betray the fact “that there were Christians who believed in mantic dreams without reservation.”¹⁰⁶ Two observations are needed in order to qualify such a categorical statement. First, one must take into account the rhetoric of magic. The accusation of magic was typical of ancient polemic and often included stereotypical language.¹⁰⁷ Thus, the descriptions of heretical practices in terms of magic cannot be taken at face value. Second, in terms of dream magic the descriptions are consistently sent-dreams; there is no accusation of requested-dreams. Sent-dreams may simply be part of the rhetoric of magic, but the absence of requested-dreams could suggest the acceptance of this form of dream magic. In the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a revelation is requested through prayer and fasting and is granted in a dream.¹⁰⁸ The martyr Perpetua is asked by her brother to request a vision from God so that it may be known whether she will be released or martyred. Perpetua consents and prays to God for a vision, which is granted in the form of a dream.¹⁰⁹ Following the Jewish tradition, these revelatory dreams are obtained through the

¹⁰⁶Eitrem, “Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual,” 182.

¹⁰⁷See Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 9-26; and Mihwa Choi, “Christianity, Magic, and Difference: Name-Calling and Resistance between the Lines in *Contra Celsum*,” *Semeia* 79 (1997): 75-92.

¹⁰⁸Herm. *Vis.* 3.1.1-2; also cf. 2.2.1.

¹⁰⁹*Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, 4.1-2, 10.

ritualistic activities of prayer and/or fasting, which in the Greco-Roman context can be considered magical.¹¹⁰ Once again, within the context of paganism and heresy dream magic is routinely condemned by Christian writers, but within the context of proto-orthodoxy aspects of dream magic may have existed.

As stated in the beginning of our discussion of the practice of dreams, it is important to recognize the vague distinction between magic, divination, and cultic practices in the Greco-Roman world. What is condemned as magic by one group is simply the religious practices of another group.¹¹¹ The elements of dream divination and magic as discussed find expression in the cultic activities of the Greco-Roman world.

Dreams and Greco-Roman Cults

In his *Laws*, Plato bemoans the situation of his time in which cults, temples, and altars were easily established by anyone at any place and any time, and he specifically mentions dreams (ὄνειροι) and visions (φάσματα) as the cause of this unchecked escalation of assorted cults and their accompanied dedicatory gifts.¹¹² Plato's description of this association of dreams and visions with cultic activity is illustrated and supported by an abundance of inscriptions

¹¹⁰See Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 335-6.

¹¹¹Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World*, 16-17; see also Alan F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (ed. R. Van Den Brock and M. J. Vermaseren; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 349-75.

¹¹²Plato, *Leg.* 909E-910A.

as well as literary accounts. We will begin this study of dreams and cults by reviewing accounts of how certain cults were established or introduced based on a dream.

Dating from the 4th – 3rd century B.C.E., an inscription from the city of Priene relates how a certain Philios was commanded in a dream to establish the cult of Naulochos, a local hero:

While sleeping, Philios, a Cypriot from Salamis and son of Ariston, saw a dream (ὄναρ): Naulochos and the Thesmophoroi, chaste mistresses in white apparel. And in threefold visions (ὄψεσι) they commanded him to worship Naulochos as patron hero of the city and pointed out the place for his shrine. Because of this, Philios established the cult of Naulochos.¹¹³

Such an establishment of a hero cult is reminiscent of the interpretative comments of Artemidorus. He states that if one sees in a dream a hero or heroine who is “downcast, unattractive, and small,” the dream signifies the need to honor that one “through the institution of a cult.”¹¹⁴

Another quite lengthy inscription from the late second or early first centuries B.C.E at Philadelphia narrates the establishment and regulations of a

¹¹³*IPriene* 196 (text Renberg, Cat. No. 387; modified translation from F. T. van Straten, “Daikrates’ Dream: A Votive Relief from Kos, and some other kat’ onar dedications,” *BaBesch* 51 (1976): 15).

¹¹⁴Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.69 (White). The inscription and Artemidorus’ comments do have differences. The inscription recounts a command, while Artemidorus’ comments only deal with symbolic dreams. We will discuss these different categories of dreams and Artemidorus’ particular concerns in Part 2 of this chapter.

private – or associational – cult.¹¹⁵ According to the inscription, Zeus gave the cultic regulations to a certain Dionysius in his sleep (καθ' ὕπνον). These regulations (παραγγέλλματα) included “the performance of the purifications, the cleansings, and the mysteries, in accordance with both the ancestral customs and what has now been written.”¹¹⁶ In addition to Zeus, the shrine also included a number of altars dedicated to traditional deities and divinized abstractions (e.g., Arete, Hygieia, Agathe Tyche, Agathos Daimon, and others). Barton and Horsley contend that the inscription moves beyond a simple reconstitution of previous cultic activity: “it bears witness to the establishment of what is substantially a new cult,” and “the dream provides the sanction for these alterations.”¹¹⁷

Found within the precincts of the Sarapis sanctuary at Thessalonica, an inscription dating from the first or second century C.E. recounts how the cult of Sarapis was introduced to the Lokrian city of Opous.¹¹⁸ Like the Asclepius cult, the cult of Sarapis provided divine counsel and healing through the practice of

¹¹⁵*SIG*³ 985. Text, translation, and discussion of this inscription is provided by S. C. Barton and G. H. R. Horsley, “A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches,” *JAC* 24 (1981): 7-41.

¹¹⁶*SIG*³ 985, lines 12-14 (modified trans. of Barton and Horsley).

¹¹⁷Barton and Horsley, “A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches,” 12.

¹¹⁸*IG* X.2, 1, 255. Text, translation, and discussion of this inscription is provided by G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1976* (North Ryde, Australia: Macquarie University, 1981), 29-32.

incubation; that is, the supplicant would sleep in a designated space within the temple precinct in order to receive divine help through a dream. In the inscription, a man named Xenainetos comes to the Sarapis shrine (οἶκος) at Thessalonika for some unspecified counsel. As he sleeps, Sarapis appears to him and instructs him that when he returns to Opous he is “to report to Eurynomos the son of Timasitheos that he should receive (ὑποδέξασθαι) him [i.e., the god] and his sister Isis; and to give to Eurynomos the letter which was under his pillow.”¹¹⁹ Xenainetos awakens and is perplexed by the dream (ὄνειρον) because of the political enmity (ἀντιπολιτεία) that exists between him and Eurynomos. Xenainetos falls asleep again and has the same dream. When he awakens, he finds a letter under his pillow, just as it was indicated in the dream. When he returns to Opous, Xenainetos relates his experience to Eurynomos and gives him the letter, which describes the event exactly as Xenainetos had reported it. Eurynomos then acknowledges Sarapis and Isis and appoints a woman named Sosinike to perform the proper sacrifices in her house along with her other household gods. The Sarapis cult becomes more public after Sosinike’s death, when her grand-daughter “transmitted the (cult) and administered the mysteries of the gods among those who also were non-participants (ἀμετόχους) in the rites.”¹²⁰ Horsley suggests that the inscription functioned as a “piece of

¹¹⁹IG X.2, 1, 255, lines 5-7 (Horsley).

¹²⁰IG X.2, 1, 255, lines 20-23 (Horsley).

religious propaganda” for the Sarapis/Isis cult in Opous.¹²¹ The propaganda, however, most likely serves the Sarapis cult of Thessalonike, since the inscription was displayed there. It perhaps heightened the status of Thessalonike as a center of Sarapis/Isis worship and its propagation.

There are also several literary accounts that associate dreams and the establishment of a cult. First, Pausanias relates the tradition about the founding of the temple of Thetis, a sea-nymph and mother of Achilles, in the city of Laconia. After being taken to Laconia as a prisoner of war, a priestess of Thetis named Cleo establishes the cult in that city “because of a vision in a dream” (κατὰ ὄψιν ὀνειράτος).¹²²

Plutarch gives an account of an incident in the life of Themistocles, in which “the Mother of the Gods appeared to him in a dream” (τὴν μητέρα τῶν θεῶν ὄναρ φανείσαν).¹²³ Pisidian mercenaries were waiting in a village called the Lion’s Head to assassinate Themistocles. In something of a riddle, the goddess in the dream warned Themistocles to “shun a head of lions, so that you may not encounter a lion.” The dream ended with the goddess demanding that Themistocles’ daughter be given as the goddess’ servant (θεράπειναν). Themistocles bypassed the village; and through a series of events occasioned by his detour, Themistocles was auspiciously saved from the assassins’ plot. And as

¹²¹Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 20.

¹²²Pausanias, *Descr.* 3.14.4 (Jones and Ormerod, LCL).

¹²³Plutarch, *Them.* 30.1 (Perrin, LCL).

Plutarch writes, “Thus Themistocles escaped the peril, and because he was amazed at the epiphany (ἐπιφάνειαν) of the goddess, he built a temple in Magnesia in honour of Dindymené, and made his daughter Mnesiptolema her priestess.”¹²⁴ The selection of Themistocles’ daughter as a priestess based on a dream illustrates another cultic function of dreams: the appointment of cultic personnel via a dream.¹²⁵

In addition to the establishment of a cult on the basis of a dream, a number of inscriptions bear witness to the dedication of a temple or setting up an altar because someone was commanded or signified to do so in a dream. In Pergamum from the imperial period, a woman named Tyllias sets up a temple in accordance with a dream: “In accordance with a dream Tyllias d[edicated] the temple to ----- for a certain divine act” (Τυλλίας κατ’ ὄναρ Δ[---] τῶι θείῳ τὸν ναὸν ἰ[δρύσατο]).¹²⁶ The cultic location of where this inscription was displayed is unknown; and the inscription is broken where presumably the deity for whom the temple is dedicated is specified. Also in Pergamum, an adherent of Demeter named Leucios Castricios Paulos set up two altars in the sanctuary of Demeter in response to dreams. One altar was set up for Arete (“Virtue”) and Sophrosune (“Temperance”) and has the inscription, “To Arete and Sophrosune. Leucios Castricios Paulos, a devotee, [set up this altar] in accordance with a

¹²⁴Plutarch, *Them.* 30.3 (Perrin, LCL).

¹²⁵For other examples, see van Straten, “Daikrates’ Dream,” 16, n. 240.

¹²⁶*I Pergamon VII.2*, 295 [imperial period] (text Renberg, Cat. No. 356).

dream" (Ἀρετῆ καὶ Σωφροσύνη Λεύκιος Καστρίκιος Παῦλος μύστης κατ' ὄναρ). The other altar was dedicated to Pistis ("Faith") and Homonia ("Concord") and reads, "To Pistis and Homonia. Leucios Castricios Paulos, a devotee, [set up this altar] in accordance with a dream (Πίστει καὶ Ὁμονοίᾳ Λεύκιος Καστρίκιος Παῦλος μύστης κατ' ὄναρ).¹²⁷

In the Asclepius sanctuary at Epidaurus, a temple and statue were set up for the god Telesphorus¹²⁸ by a certain Phaboullos because of a dream: "To Savior Telesphorus. Because of a dream Phaboullos [set up] the temple and the statue" (Τελεσφόρωι Σωτήρι Φάβουλλος ἐξ ὀνειράτος τὸν ναὸν καὶ τὸ ἄγαλμα).¹²⁹ The Asklepieion at Epidaurus also housed a couple of altars that were set up based on the experience of a dream. The inscription on one altar reads, "In accordance with a dream Hierokles [set up this] altar of Mercy" (Ἐλέου βωμὸν Ἱεροκλῆς κατ' ὄναρ).¹³⁰ Another altar has the inscription, "In accordance with a dream Spondos, son of Diopeithes, [set up this altar] of Remembrance of Auxesia in his twenty fifth year of bearing the sacrificial fire"

¹²⁷Renberg, Cat. No. 352 and 353 [2nd C.E.]. Renberg cites the publication of these inscriptions as Hugo Hepding, "Die Arbeiten zu Pergamon 1908-1909, II: Die Inschriften," *AM* 35 (1910), 359-360.

¹²⁸As the offspring of Asclepius, Telesphorus was a healing deity that was worshipped along side of Asclepius and Hygieia.

¹²⁹*IG* IV² 1, 561 [1st/2nd C.E.] (text Renberg, Cat. No. 44).

¹³⁰*IG* IV² 1, 513 [2nd/3rd C.E.] (text Renberg, Cat. No. 51).

(Μνείας Αύξησιας [Σπ]όνδος Διοπείθους πυροφορήσας [τὸ] κε' ἔτος κατ' ὄναρ).¹³¹

As a means of divine communication dreams were not only the inspiration for establishing cults and setting up altars and temples, they were also the *modus operandi* of divination for some Greco-Roman cults, including the cults of Asclepius, Sarapis/Isis, Amphiaraus, and various local heroes.¹³² Individuals would visit these cults and undergo the ritual of incubation in order to obtain a dream. The actual procedure of incubation is not described in any inscriptions; only a few literary sources depict the ritual.¹³³ Once again, Pausanias' description of the Temple of Amphiaraus in Oropus illustrates the ritual of incubation:

One who has come to consult Amphiaraus is wont first to purify himself (καθήρασθαι). The mode of purification (καθάρσιον) is to sacrifice to the god, and they sacrifice not only to him but also to all those whose names are on the altar. And when all these things have been first done, they sacrifice a ram, and, spreading the skin under them, go to sleep and await enlightenment in a dream (ἀναμένοντες δήλωσιν ὄνειρατος).¹³⁴

¹³¹*IG IV² 1, 386* [2nd C.E.] (text Renberg, Cat. No. 46). Auxesia was the goddess of growth.

¹³²Renberg, "Commanded By the Gods," 256-259.

¹³³Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.34.5 (Amphiaraus at Oropus) and 9.39.5-14 (Trophonius at Lebadeia); Strabo, *Geogr.* 6.3.9 (Calchas at Daunian); and Aristophanes, *Plut.* 653-747 (Asclepius at Athens). For a discussion and bibliography on incubation, see Fritz Graf, "Inkubation," *DNP* 5:1006-7.

¹³⁴Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.34.5 (Jones and Ormerod, LCL).

The overall structure of incubation can be discerned when comparing Pausanias' account with the other sources. As already indicated with some of the magical dream rituals, the supplicant first undergoes purification rites, whether by sacrificing, bathing, and/or making an offering.¹³⁵ Then the supplicant enters a sacred sleep-room (ἐνκοιμητηρίος οὐ ἄδυτον), where he or she would sleep upon the skin of a sacrificed animal¹³⁶ or a straw mattress¹³⁷ and receive a dream. Though not described in the literary accounts, the inscriptions indicate that the supplicant would be expected to pay a fee or offer a dedicatory gift the following morning.¹³⁸

As evidenced by the abundance of inscriptional testimonies, the purpose for seeking a dream at a temple was primarily for the purpose of healing, especially at the temples of Asclepius and Amphiraus.¹³⁹ As shown by Klauck, the inscriptions generally follow a certain pattern: (1) the name of the supplicant, (2) the nature of the illness, (3) the manner of healing by means of a dream, and

¹³⁵Aristophanes, *Plut.* 653-747; Pausanias, *Descr.* 9.39.5-14.

¹³⁶Strabo, *Geogr.* 6.3.9.

¹³⁷Aristophanes, *Plut.* 653-747.

¹³⁸For example, see *IG IV*² 1, 121-22.22 (Edelstein, T. 423.22).

¹³⁹For the most convenient and copious, though not exhaustive, collection and translation of the Asclepius testimonies, see Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein (eds.), *Asclepius: Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (with new introduction by Gary B. Ferngren; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

(4) a demonstration of the healing.¹⁴⁰ The following samples illustrate this pattern, but more importantly for our purposes they demonstrate the ancient cultic practice of dreams and healing.

Cleinatas of Thebes with the lice. He came with a great number of lice on his body, slept in the Temple, and sees a vision (ὄψιν) . It seemed (ἔδόκει) to him that the god stripped him and made him stand upright, named and with a broom brushed the lice from off his body. When day came he left the Temple well.¹⁴¹

Timon . . . wounded by a spear under his eye. While sleeping in the Temple he saw a dream (ἐνύπνιον). It seemed (ἔδόκει) to him that the god rubbed down an herb and poured in into his eye. And he became well.¹⁴²

Nicasibula of Messene for offspring slept in the Temple and saw a dream (ἐνύπνιον). It seemed (ἔδόκει) to her that the god approached her with a snake which was creeping behind him; and with that snake had intercourse. Within a year she had two sons.¹⁴³

These testimonies come from the large columns of the Asclepius Temple in Epidaurus, and so they no doubt serve as propaganda for the cult and as hopeful encouragement to those who sought healing.¹⁴⁴ The ancient belief and experience of incubation for the purpose of healing, however, is widely attested

¹⁴⁰Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 162-163.

¹⁴¹*IG IV² 1, 121-22.28* (Edelstein, T. 423.28).

¹⁴²*IG IV² 1, 121-22.40* (Edelstein, T. 423.40).

¹⁴³*IG IV² 1, 121-22.42* (Edelstein, T. 423.42).

¹⁴⁴Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 166. Klauck also states that the “massive collection of accounts of healing, with its universalizing effect attained through mentioning the names and places of origin of those who sought help, diverts the attention from the unfavorable statistics concerning healings” (166).

in various and diverse sources¹⁴⁵ and proves to be an important aspect of the ancient belief about dreams.

Although cultic incubation was largely for purposes of healing, individuals would also undergo this dream ritual in order to obtain an oracle. For example, dating from the imperial period there is graffiti scribbled on the wall of the *Memnonion* in Abydos (Egypt), presumably by someone going to the temple for incubation: “I Achilles am coming so that a vision will appear to me and give a sign about the things I am praying” (ἐχὼ Ἀχιλλεὺς ἔ<ρ>χομαι θεάσασθαι ὄνυρον σημένοντά μοι περὶ ὧν εὐχομαι).¹⁴⁶ Even the Asclepius cult entertained requests other than those of healing.¹⁴⁷ One of the inscriptional testimonies¹⁴⁸ recounts how a boy dove into the sea and came up into an enclosure surrounded by rocks and could not get out. When the boy did not return home, the boy’s father entreated Asclepius through incubation. In a dream (ἐνύπνιον), the god showed the father the exact location of the boy. When the father left the Temple, he found the boy just as the dream had directed. Renberg notes that despite the lack of epigraphical evidence “there must have

¹⁴⁵Once again, these sources can be consulted in Edelstein and Edelstein (eds), *Asclepius*, 1:179-342.

¹⁴⁶Renberg, Test. No. 21. Renberg cites the publication of this inscription as Perdrizet-Lefebvre, *Memnonion*, No. 238.

¹⁴⁷See *IG II² 4355* (Renberg, Cat. No. 9) and *IG II² 4358* (Renberg, Cat. No. 10), dedicatory gifts offered to Asclepius for receiving counsel or advice (ὑποθήκαις and ὑποθημοσ[ύνας] respectively) presumably through a dream.

¹⁴⁸*IG IV² 1, 121-22.24* (Edelstein, T. 423.24).

been numerous other shrines and sanctuaries where ancient worshippers could consult the resident divinity and receive a dream-oracle."¹⁴⁹ Like the dream-request rituals in the magical texts, dreams were sought in some cultic settings for revelatory purposes.

Turning to the Jewish and Christian tradition of dreams and cults, one finds several accounts in the Jewish scriptures that associate dreams and cultic activity. In Genesis 28:10-22, Jacob has a dream in which he sees a ladder that reaches to heaven and hears God speaking. He responds to the dream by setting up a sacred pillar, pouring oil on it, and making a vow. He calls the place Bethel, which becomes an important sanctuary in ancient Israel. Something similar takes place with Isaac and the sanctuary of Beer-sheba (Gen 26:23-25). The Lord appears to Isaac at night and reiterates the promise first made to Abraham; Isaac responds by building an altar. Though Jacob and Isaac are not commanded in the dream to establish the respective cults of Bethel and Beer-sheba, the dream traditions and their responses function to legitimize the sanctuaries.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the stories would be customary to a Greco-Roman audience, whose

¹⁴⁹Renberg, "Commanded By the Gods," 258.

¹⁵⁰Robert Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel: Its Structure in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Dreams and Its Theological Significance* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), 67-68; and Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible* (HUCM 25; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001), 183-90.

religious context associates dreams and the establishments of cults and the setting up of altars.¹⁵¹

The Jewish scriptures also contain stories that can be considered incubations. In 1 Kings 3:1-15, Solomon goes to the “high place” at Gibeon, where he offered sacrifices and incenses and received a dream. In the dream Solomon requests wisdom in order to lead rightly the people; God grants his request. Less certain as to incubation is the story of the boy Samuel (1 Sam 3).¹⁵² Though there is no sacrifice or request, Samuel is sleeping “in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was” (v. 3; NRSV), when the Lord speaks to him. Though specific incubation features are missing, the cultic servant Samuel (v. 1) receives a dream while sleeping in the temple. For a Greco-Roman reader, the cultic setting for the dream oracle would be familiar and perhaps suggestive of an incubation experience.

The association of dreams and cultic matters are also described in post-biblical literary texts. In *Jubilees* 32:1-2, Levi spends the night at Bethel, the place of his father’s dream, and has his own dream, which signifies his appointment as priest. The priestly office of Levi based on a dream is further expressed in the *Testament of Levi*. Levi visits Bethel and has a dream in which he is installed and

¹⁵¹See Gen 35:6-15 where Jacob returns to the place of his dream and sets up an altar.

¹⁵²For those who argue the story as incubation, see references in Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 180 n. 154. Against an example of incubation, see Gnuse, *The Dream Theophany of Samuel*, 150-52.

ordained as priest in an elaborate ceremony.¹⁵³ In *2 Enoch* 69:4-6, Methusalam, the son of Enoch, at the request of the people comes to the altar of the Lord to pray that the Lord would raise up a priest for them. He then sleeps at the altar; the Lord appears to him in a dream and commands him to take on the function of priest. The circumstances of visiting the altar, making a request, and sleeping indicate the intention of incubation. Another example of incubation is found in *2 Baruch* 34:1 – 43:3. On behalf of the people, Baruch goes to the Holy of Holies to pray. After he prays, he “fell asleep at that place and saw a vision in the night.”¹⁵⁴ Finally, Josephus recounts an instance of incubation.¹⁵⁵ On hearing of Alexander the Great’s approaching army, the high priest Jaddus enters the temple, makes prayers and sacrifices, and then sleeps at the place of the altar. God tells him in a dream to welcome the army with the appropriate gestures and the people will be protected. Given the literary character of these texts and the lack of archaeological evidence for Jewish incubation, the practice of incubation in Judaism remains uncertain. It is not a customary practice of Judaism, though occasionally it may have been performed. It is interesting to note, however, that Strabo recounts a tradition of Jewish incubation as part of his description of the Jews. He states that Moses taught that “people who have good dreams (τὸς

¹⁵³*T. Levi* 8:1-19.

¹⁵⁴*Bar.* 36:1 (Klijn. *OTP*).

¹⁵⁵Josephus, *A.J.* 11.326-328.

εὐνοεῖρους) should sleep in the sanctuary, not only themselves on their own behalf, but also others for the rest of the people.”¹⁵⁶

The association of dreams and cults in Christianity seems to be a late development emerging with the cults of the martyrs. Though cautiously because of their popularity, Canon 83 of the council of Carthage seeks to check the unauthorized establishment of altars and shrines for martyrs, particularly those altars that have been set up because of dreams. The shrines of martyrs also became places of incubation. The most famous of these was the cult of St. Thecla, where healing, revelation, and guidance were often granted through dreams.¹⁵⁷

Dreams functioned in Greco-Roman cults in a variety of ways: establishing cults, setting up altars, appointing cultic personnel, and incubation. This cultic function of dreams further illustrates the divinatory nature of dreams in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Dream Interpreters

An understanding of the practice of dreams in the Greco-Roman world is not complete without properly recognizing the mediating role of dream interpreters. This role was referred to in the above discussion of dreams and

¹⁵⁶Strabo, *Georg.* 16.2.35 (Jones, LCL).

¹⁵⁷See Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity* (O ECS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 48, 58, 60, and 126; Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *JRSt* 83 (1993): 125; Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 117.

divination, where dream interpreters and their art were shown to be firmly established within the larger practice of ancient divination. Given the common experience of dreams, one can reasonably imagine that dream interpreters were regularly consulted. This perception is backhandedly supported by Theophrastus, who in his critique of superstition (δισεσιδαμονία) scoffs at a population that “never has a dream but rushes to dream interpreters (ὄνειροκρίτας), diviners (μάντις), or even bird-diviners (ὄρηιτηροσκόπους) to ask what god or goddess must be honored.”¹⁵⁸ Theophrastus’ comment provides a structure to the following investigation of dream interpreters: (1) the mediating role of dream interpreters in the cultic honoring of deities; and (2) dream interpreters as a profession among diviners. Thus, the following investigation of dream interpreters will first consider dream interpreters in relation to Greco-Roman cults and then the profession of dream interpretation in more general terms.

In the discussion of dreams and Greco-Roman cults, we noted that temples and altars were often set up in accordance with a dream. It remains uncertain, however, whether these dedications – along with other numerous inscriptional dedications based on a dream – were the result of a direct, immediate appearance of the deity in a dream, or whether the dream was a symbolic dream that needed interpretation. Renberg states the problem as follows:

¹⁵⁸Theophrastus, *Char.* 16.11 (modified trans. from Edmonds, LCL).

It must be remembered that *viso/iusso* dedications represent the end of a process, whereas the dream or vision was the beginning of that process: the final appearance of an inscription recording a dream or vision may not always have been the immediate and direct result of divine communication. One of the many problems associated with *viso/iusso* dedications is the question of whether the individuals who commissioned them did so following consultation with a religious authority, instead of interpreting the dreams themselves. The potential involvement of such interpreters in the process culminating in the erection of *viso/iusso* dedications, not given due attention by those who have studied this phenomenon, is significant because reliance on an expert interpreter would suggest that a dream was more likely to have featured obscure symbols, human messengers, or mute divinities rather than a god clearly expressing his wishes.¹⁵⁹

Despite this terminational character of the inscriptions, which has the effect of concealing the possible role of dream interpreters, there is evidence that indicates that dream interpreters at times played a mediating role in the cultic honoring of deities.

In addition to Theophratus' remark that connects dream interpreters and other diviners with cultic honoring of deities, there are several inscriptions that actually state the role of a dream interpreter in their being set up. At the Sarapis/Isis cult at Delos dating from the early first century BCE, two identical inscriptions were dedicated "according to a command through the dream-interpreter Menodoros" (κατὰ πρόσταγμα διὰ ὄνειροκρίτου Μηνοδώρου).¹⁶⁰ In addition to naming the dream interpreter, the inscriptions also specify the priest who was officiating at the time of the dedication, a certain Leonos.

¹⁵⁹Renberg, "Commanded By the Gods," 249-250.

¹⁶⁰*IDelos* 2105 and 2106 (text Renberg, Cat. No. 142 and 143). Cp. also the badly damaged *IDelos* 2110 (text Renberg, Cat. No. 148).

Another Delos inscription indicates that an unnamed dream interpreter (προσσαναφέροντες τῶι ὄνειροκρίτη) was instrumental in the setting up of the dedication; it also includes the presiding priest, a certain Aristion.¹⁶¹ The probable scenario of these inscriptions is that the one offering the dedicatory gift first consulted a dream interpreter, who discerned the dream as a command to honor the god. The appropriate dedication was then made before the priest. What is uncertain, however, is the exact nature of the relationship between the dream interpreters and the cults: are the dream interpreters official personnel of the cult, or are they independent professionals?

An archaeological artifact found near the temple of Sarapis in Sakkara (Memphis) offers one possible answer to this question. On a limestone stele dated around 200 BCE, the following inscription is found: "I interpret dreams by the command of the god. To good success! A Cretan is the one who interprets here" (Ἐνύπνια κρίνω τοῦ θεοῦ πρόστιγμα ἔχων: τυχάγαθαί: Κρής ἐστιν ὁ κρίνων τάδε).¹⁶² Noting two holes in the top of the stele, Étienne Bernand proposes that it was a suspended sign outside the dream interpreter's place of residence, which was located along the commercially crowded road that led to

¹⁶¹*IDelos* 2151 [late 2nd cent. BCE] (text Renberg, Cat. No. 150).

¹⁶²Étienne Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine: recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des grecs en Égypte* (Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon 98; Paris: Belles lettres, 1969), 436. A picture of the stele is provided on plate LXXIX. See also, Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 12, who offers a verbal description of the stele.

the temple.¹⁶³ The purpose of this sign, of course, was to attract patrons as they approached the temple of Sarapis. Bernand's interpretation is plausible based on a comment by Plutarch about a certain Lysimachus, the grandson of Aristides. Plutarch states that Lysimachus "made his own living by means of a sort of dream-interpreting tablet (πινακίου ονειροκριτικού), his seat being near the so-called Iaccheium [i.e., Temple of Bacchus]."¹⁶⁴ Bernand believes that the Cretan dream interpreter was a private individual who was authorized by the temple officials.¹⁶⁵ This sort of arrangement, of course, would be economically beneficial both to the Cretan as well as the Sarapis cult. And yet, although Lysimachus makes his living by the temple, Plutarch refers to him as "a very poor man" (μαλα πενητα),¹⁶⁶ which suggests a less formal or official connection to the temple personnel. Thus, whether authorized or not, these two examples suggest that in some cases dream interpreters strategically stationed themselves near temples in order to provide a service for those coming to the temple, a service that most likely resulted in a dedicatory gift.

The relationship between dream interpreters and various cults is further complicated by the fact that some inscriptions include dream interpreters with a list of temple personnel. An inscription from the Sarapis sanctuary in Athens

¹⁶³Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine*, 436-8.

¹⁶⁴Plutarch, *Arist.* 27.3 (Perrin, LCL).

¹⁶⁵Bernand, *Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine*, 438.

¹⁶⁶Plutarch, *Arist.* 27.3 (Perrin, LCL).

was dedicated “according to a command, during the priesthood of Menander, son of Artemon, of Alopeke, when Asopokles of Phyla was *kleidouchos* [“keeper of the keys”], Sosikrates of Laodikeia was *zakoros* [“temple attendant”], and Dionysos of Antioch was judging dreams (κρίνοντος τὰ ὄράματα Διονυσίου Ἀντιοχέως).”¹⁶⁷ It is most probable that the dream interpreter Dionysos played a role in the setting up of this dedicatory inscription, but his place among the cult personnel remains ambiguous.¹⁶⁸ Is he a cult official, or is he a dream interpreter like the Cretan or Lysimachus who practices his art in close proximity to the temple?

Another Athenian inscription, this time connected with the cult of Aphrodite, was dedicated by a woman “who is both [Aphrodite’s] torch-bearer and a dream-interpreter” (οὔσα καὶ λυχνάπτρια αὐτῆς καὶ ὄνειροκρίτις).¹⁶⁹ The inscription then concludes by identifying certain cultic officials: Aimilios, the keeper of the sacred vestments (στολίζοντος Αἰμιλου); Dionysos, the minister of the Bacchus festival (ἱερατεύοντος ἱακχαγωγῶ Διονυσίου); and Eukarpos, temple-attendant of sacred vessels (ζακορεύοντος ἁγιαφόρου Εὐκάρπου). Once again, uncertainty surrounds the precise situation. Does the woman’s role as dream interpreter have any relation to her role as torch bearer of

¹⁶⁷*SIRIS*, No. 5 [late 2nd cent. BCE] (text Renberg, Cat. No. 25; translation Renberg, 255).

¹⁶⁸Cf. Renberg, “Commanded By the Gods,” 255.

¹⁶⁹*IG* II² 4771 (text Leuci, p. 246).

the Aphrodite cult? In any case, dream interpreters were associated with various cults, although the exact nature of that association remains unclear.

What is most certain, however, is the widespread existence of dream interpreters in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁷⁰ Tertullian attests to the established tradition of dream interpretation by listing esteemed dream interpreters: Artemon, Antiphon, Strato, Philochorus, Epicharmus, Serapion, Cratippus, and Dionysius of Rhodes, and Hermippus.¹⁷¹ Throughout his *Onirocritica*, Artemidorus refers to numerous professional dream interpreters and their handbooks on dream interpretation: Antiphon of Athens, Aristander of Telmessus, Demetrius of Phalerum,, Antipater, Alexander of Myndus, Panyasis of Halicarnassus, Nicostratus of Ephesus, Apollonius of Attalia, Apollodorus of Telmessus, and Geminus of Tyre.¹⁷²

Dream interpreters were often considered diviners who practiced other divinatory arts as well. A case in point is Aristander of Telmessus, the legendary diviner of Alexander the Great. Artemidorus refers to him as “the best dream

¹⁷⁰For a collection of primary sources of dream interpreters, see Darius Del Corno (ed.), *Graecorum de re onirocritica scriptorum reliquiae* (Milano: Instituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1969).

¹⁷¹Tertullian, *An.* 46.10.

¹⁷²Artemidorus, *Onir.* 2.14 (Antiphon of Athens); 1.31 (Aristander of Telmessus); 2.44 (Demetrius of Phalerum); 4.65 (Antipater); 1.67, 2.9, 2.66 (Alexander of Myndus); 1.2, 1.64, 2.34 (Panyasis of Halicarnassus); 1.2 (Nicostratus of Ephesus); 1.32, 3.28 (Apollonius of Attalia); 1.79 (Apollodorus of Telmessus); and 2.44 (Geminus of Tyre).

interpreter,"¹⁷³ and his interpretation of dreams in relation to the life of Alexander are chronicled by Alexander's biographers.¹⁷⁴ But the diviner Aristander also discerned the significance of a sweating statue,¹⁷⁵ divined by sacrifice,¹⁷⁶ interpreted portending behaviors of birds,¹⁷⁷ and perceived the auspicious significance of chance circumstances.¹⁷⁸

The interpretation of dreams was not only practiced by esteemed diviners, but it was performed by those who eked out a living in the marketplaces. Artemidorus not only draws upon the dream-books of respected dream interpreters, but he has also consulted dream interpreters considered less respectable:

I, on the other hand, have not only taken special pains to procure every book on the interpretation of dreams, but have consorted for many years with the much-despised diviners of the marketplace. People who assume a holier-than-thou countenance and who arch their eyebrows in a superior way dismiss them as beggars, charlatans, and buffoons, but I have ignored their disparagement.¹⁷⁹

This critical attitude of marketplace diviners referred to by Artemidorus is confirmed by Cicero, who quotes such sentiments from a certain Appius and

¹⁷³Artemidorus, *Onir.* 4.23 (White).

¹⁷⁴Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.4; Arrian, *Anab.* 2.18.1.

¹⁷⁵Plutarch, *Alex.* 14.8 (par. Arrian, *Anab.* 1.11.2).

¹⁷⁶Plutarch, *Alex.* 25.1-4.

¹⁷⁷Arrian, *Anab.* 1.25.6-8; 2.26.4.

¹⁷⁸Arrian, *Anab.* 3.2.1-2; 3.7.6.

¹⁷⁹Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.praef. (White).

Ennius.¹⁸⁰ Thus, there existed a spectrum of dream interpreters in the ancient world along the lines of cultic and “secular,” professional and freelance, respected and disreputable.

For Jews and Christians, the biblical tradition presented Joseph and Daniel as dream interpreters *par excellence*. Interestingly, both Joseph and Daniel practice the art of dream interpretation in service of foreign kings, Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar respectively, whose own diviners are not able to interpret their dreams.¹⁸¹ Also noteworthy is that both Joseph and Daniel credit God for their ability to interpret dreams, because God is the source of their interpretation. Joseph asks rhetorically, “Do not interpretations belong to God” (Gen 40:8 NRSV); and Daniel receives the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in a dream of his own (Dan 2:19). Moreover, Daniel’s dream-visions in chapters 7–12 are accompanied by interpretations given by angels.

The existence of Jewish dream interpreters is evident in middle Judaism and even seems to be characteristic of Jewish divination. Josephus reports about a symbolic dream of the tetrarch Archelaus. When other dream interpreters – presumably Jewish – disagreed as to its meaning, an Essene named Simon correctly interpreted the dream, which came to pass five days later.¹⁸² Josephus considered himself an dream interpreter. Writing in third person, Josephus

¹⁸⁰Cicero, *Div.* 1.132.

¹⁸¹Gen 41:8 and Dan 2:2-11.

¹⁸²Josephus, *A.J.* 17.345-348.

states: “He was an interpreter of dreams (κρίσεις ὀνείρων) and skilled in divining the meaning of ambiguous utterances of the Diety; a priest himself and of priestly descent, he was not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books.”¹⁸³

The juxtaposition in his statement of being a dream interpreter and a priest has been taken by several scholars that “dream interpretation in this era was a priestly function.”¹⁸⁴ But like that of the larger Greco-Roman world, Jewish dream interpreters could also be found among the “marketplace” diviners.

Though cast in the genre and style of satire, Juvenal refers to a “palsied” Jewish woman who begs and seeks gain by dream interpretation:

She is an interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, a high priestess of the tree, a trusty go-between of the highest heaven. She, too, fills her palm, but more sparingly, for Jews will tell you dreams of any kind you please for the minutest coins.¹⁸⁵

The Talmud also attests to a strong tradition of dream interpreters in ancient

¹⁸³Josephus, *B.J.* 3.352 (Thackeray, LCL).

¹⁸⁴Robert Gnuse, *Dreams and the Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Tradio-Historical Analysis* (AGJU 36; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 137 (see n. 27 for secondary literature).

¹⁸⁵Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.542-547 (Ramsay, LCL).

Judaism,¹⁸⁶ even containing what is most certainly excerpts from a Jewish dream book.¹⁸⁷

The evidence is very slim for dream interpreters in early Christianity. Once again, within a Gentile context Christianity is critical of dream interpreters because of their connection with paganism. Thus, the *Apostolic Traditions* as transmitted by Hippolytus prohibits the occupation of dream interpretation for Christians, but dream interpretation is included with other professions such as magicians, astrologers, diviners, and snake charmers.¹⁸⁸ Clement of Alexander counts dream interpreters as instruments of demons.¹⁸⁹ And yet, Christians seem to have interpreted dreams. The martyr Perpetua is able to interpret her dreams in a manner consistent with the larger Greco-Roman tradition of dream interpretation.¹⁹⁰ A particular Christian approach to dream interpretation is the reciprocal relationship of dreams and scriptural interpretation. Patricia Miller argues that in patristic literature symbolic dreams often become “the place where

¹⁸⁶Brigitte, Stemberger, “Der Traum in der rabbinischen Literatur,” *Kairos* 18 (1976): 1-42; Ehrlich, Ernst L. “Der Traum in Talmud.” *ZNW* 47 (1956): 133-45; Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 101-7; and Monford Harris, *Studies in Jewish Dream Interpretation* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc., 1994), 3-24.

^{187b}. *Berakot* 55a-57b. See Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read*, 107.

¹⁸⁸Hippolytus, *Trad. ap.* 15.

¹⁸⁹Clement of Alexandria, *Protr.* 1.3.2 and 2.11.2-3.

¹⁹⁰Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 148-83.

Scripture is interpreted.”¹⁹¹ In other words, the images and visions of dreams are not necessarily the object of interpretation but “function both in the formal and material ways as the principle as well as the substance of interpretation.”¹⁹² To interpret dreams is to interpret scripture.

Having described in the practice of dreams in the Greco-Roman world, I now turn to ancient dream classifications and theories.

*The Classifications and Theories of Dreams*¹⁹³

As described above, dreams had a religious function in the Greco-Roman world and were considered one form of divination. The phenomenon of dreams, however, demonstrated that not every dream was divinatory. Some dreams, perhaps most, simply passed with no significance. What was the nature of dreams, and from where do dreams come? This predicament of the human experience in antiquity gave rise to an intellectual tradition about the theory and classification of dreams. The following is a survey of this tradition.

In reviewing dream theory in antiquity, Patricia Miller states that there were two general ways of conceptualizing dreams in antiquity: “One was psychobiological and attempted to naturalize the phenomena of sleep and its

¹⁹¹Patricia Cox Miller, “Dreams in Patristic Literature: Divine Sense or Pagan Nonsense?,” *Studia Patristica* 18, 2 (1989): 186.

¹⁹²Miller, “Dreams in Patristic Literature,” 187.

¹⁹³For this section, I borrow with permission from my article “Philo’s *De somniis* in the Context of Ancient Dream Theories and Classifications,” *PRS* 30 (2003): 299-312.

attendant phantasms; the other was theological and connected the dreaming soul with an invisible but very real realm of spiritual beings – angels, daemons, gods.”¹⁹⁴ Cicero and Aristotle are representative of the psychobiological theory of dreams. Cicero even uses Aristotle to argue against the divinatory function of dreams. Against his Stoic interlocutor, Cicero states:

Since you deny that God made [both true and false dreams] you must admit that nature made them all. By ‘nature,’ in this connexion, I mean that force because of which the soul can never be stationary and free from motion and activity. And when, because of the weariness of the body, the soul can use neither the limbs nor the senses, it lapses into varied and untrustworthy visions, which emanate from what Aristotle terms ‘the clinging remnants of the soul’s waking acts and thoughts.’ These ‘remnants,’ when aroused, sometimes produce strange types of dreams.¹⁹⁵

The polemical context of Cicero’s statements, however, should not obscure the fact that a psychobiological theory of dreams did not necessarily preclude the possibility of meaningful dreams. For example, the medical writer Galen (2nd cent.) held to a psychobiological theory of dreams,¹⁹⁶ but he believed that some dreams could help in the diagnosis of his patients and even reveal surgical procedures:

Some people scorn dreams, omens, and portents. But I know that I have often made a diagnosis from dreams and, guided by two very clear dreams,

¹⁹⁴Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 42.

¹⁹⁵Cicero, *Div.* 2.128 (Falconer, LCL).

¹⁹⁶“[I]n sleep the soul seems to sink into the depths of the body, withdrawing from external sense-objects, and so becomes aware of the bodily condition” (περὶ τῆς ἐξ ἐνυπνίων διαγνώσεως, VI.843 Kühn); quoted and translated in E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 133 n. 104.

I once made an incision into the artery between the thumb and the index finger of the right hand, and allowed the blood to flow until it ceased flowing on its own, as the dream had instructed. I have saved many people by applying a cure prescribed in a dream.¹⁹⁷

The psychobiological theory of dreams represented the minority view in antiquity. The predominant view, as demonstrated above, was the theological theory: dreams were one of the ways in which the divine communicates to men and women. The explication of ancient dream theories as psychobiological and theological is a modern attempt to comprehend better the multifaceted idea of dreams in antiquity. In antiquity, however, these various beliefs about dreams were not mutually exclusive but sometimes held together in accordance with differing motivations and purposes. Consequently, there developed in antiquity the practice of classifying dreams.

The classification of dreams is already given its mythical expression in Homer's *Odyssey*, where Penelope describes to the disguised Odysseus two classes of dreams:

For two are the gates of shadowy dreams (ἀμεινηῶν ὄνειρων), and one is fashioned of horn and one of ivory. Those dreams that pass through the gate of sawn ivory deceive men, bringing words that find no fulfillment. But those that come forth through the gate of polished horn bring true issues to pass, when any mortal sees them.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷Galen, *Comm. in Hippocr. de humor.* 2.2. Quoted and translated in Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 46. For a discussion of Galen's views on dreams, see A. H. M. Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification," *Mnemosyne* 22 (1969): 422-4.

¹⁹⁸Homer, *Od.* 19.562-7 (Murray, LCL).

This basic distinction between true (divinatory) and false (non-divinatory) dreams became the basis upon which subsequent classifications developed. Plato seems to reflect this fundamental, two-fold category of dreams based on the state of the soul. In the *Republic*, Plato comments on how the immoral soul manifests its beastly and savage (τὸ δὲ θηριῶδες τε καὶ ἄγριον) nature in corresponding dreams.¹⁹⁹ But when the soul is virtuous and guided by reason, that person “is most likely to apprehend truth, and the visions of his dreams (αἱ ὄψεις φαντάζονται τῶν ἐνυπνίων) are least likely to be lawless (ἀράνομοι).”²⁰⁰ It should be noted, however, that Plato does not present a formal classification of dreams.²⁰¹ Thus, this survey of formal classifications of dreams will begin with the classification of Herophilus, which reflects this basic distinction between significant and insignificant dreams.

The classification of the medical writer Herophilus (c.330-260 B.C.E) is found in Plutarch’s *De placita philosophorum* 5.1.2 and Galen’s *Historia philosophiae*

¹⁹⁹Plato, *Resp.* 571c (Shorey, LCL).

²⁰⁰Plato, *Resp.* 572b (Shorey, LCL). Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 71e - 72b and Artemidorus, *Onir.* 4.praef.

²⁰¹*Contra Behr, Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, 173, who states, “Plato is the first known authority who systematized the arguments and arrangements of this [two-fold] classification.” Plato’s idea about dreams can only be demonstrated from several, unrelated comments found throughout his works. See David Gallop, “Dreaming and Waking in Plato,” *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* (ed. by John P. Anton with George L. Kustas; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), 187-90; and Kessels, “Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification,” 392-3.

106.²⁰² Herophilus identifies three classes of dreams: (1) the god-sent dreams (θεοπέμπτους), (2) natural (φυσικούς) dreams that are reflecting images of the soul (εἰδωλοποιουμένης ψυξῆς), and (3) a “combination” (συγκριματικούς) type of dream that proceeds from “what we wish we would see” (ἃ βουλόμεθα βλέπωμεν). The first two classes of dreams seem to be set in opposition to one another. Herophilus’ φυσικός dream-type corresponds to Cicero’s psychobiological description of the dream phenomenon, and thus it possesses no predictive quality. The θεοπέμπτους class, then, represents those dreams that are predictive and function as divination. Therefore, in the language of Homer, θεοπέμπτους dreams come through the gate of horn (true), and φυσικοί dreams come through the gate of ivory (false). The meaning of Herophilus’ third class, “combination” dreams, is very ambiguous.²⁰³ It seems to be a combination of the θεοπέμπτους and the φυσικός dreams, insofar as the dream has an

²⁰²Herophilus’ text is quoted and discussed, but not translated, in Kessels, “Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification,” 414; see also Dodd, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 124 n.28.

Galen’s text reads:

Ἡρόφιλος τῶν ὄνειρων τοὺς μὲν θεοπέμπτους κατ’ ἀνάγκην γίνεσθαι, τοὺς δὲ φυσικοὺς εἰδωλοποιουμένης τῆς ψυξῆς τὸ συμφέρον αὐτῇ καὶ τὸ πάντως ἐσόμενον: τοὺς δὲ συγκριματικοὺς [Plutarch, συγκραματικούς] αὐτομάτως κατ’ εἰδώλων πρόσπτωσιν ὅταν ἃ βουλόμεθα βλέπωμεν: φιλούτων γίγνεται τὰς ἐρωμένας ἐρωντων ἐν ὕπνοις.

²⁰³For a discussion of this third class, see Kessels, “Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification,” 417-22.

anthropological origin but it still comes to pass. Thus, the dream-classification of Herophilus represents a basic system of predictive and non-predictive dreams.

The dream classification of Artemidorus also emphasizes this two-fold distinction between significant and insignificant dreams, but his classification also reflects a five-class system. His classification of dreams begins with a distinction between ἐνύπνιον and ὄνειρος.²⁰⁴ As Artemidorus succinctly summarizes in the preface of Book 4:

A dream that has no meaning (ἀσημαντον) and predicts nothing (οὐδενὸς προαγορευτικὸν), one that is active only while one sleeps and that has arisen from an irrational desire, an extraordinary fear, or from a surfeit or lack of food is called an *enhyption* (ἐνύπνιον). But a dream that operates after sleep and that comes true (ἀποβάλλοντος) either for good or bad is called an *oneiros* (ὄνειρος).²⁰⁵

Oneiros is further divided on the basis of its signifying function. Dreams that correspond directly to the predicted event are called theorematic (θεωρημάτικοι). Artemidorus' example is this: "A man who was at sea dreamt that he suffered shipwreck, and it actually came true in the way that it had been presented in sleep."²⁰⁶ On the other hand, allegorical dreams (ἀλληγορικοὶ ὄνειροι) "signify one thing by means of another."²⁰⁷ Allegorical dreams require

²⁰⁴Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.1.

²⁰⁵Artemidorus, *Onir.* 4.pref. (White; text Pack).

²⁰⁶Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.2 (White).

²⁰⁷Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.2 (White).

interpretation, and so the purpose of Artemidorus' *Onirocritica* is to set forth the meaning and significance of allegorical dreams.²⁰⁸

As stated above, Artemidorus knows a five-class schema of dreams, but he does not find it helpful for his purposes. To the insignificant ἐνύπνιον he adds the φάντασμα ("apparition"), and with the significant ὄνειρος he includes the ὄραμα ("vision") and χρηματισμός ("oracle").²⁰⁹ According to Artemidorus, the ὄραμα and χρηματισμός are self-evident (theorematic), and therefore they require no elaboration or discussion.²¹⁰

This non-elaboration is perhaps explained by Macrobius in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (4th C.E.), which contains an explication of this five-dream classification. Macrobius summarizes the five types of dreams as follows:

[T]here is the enigmatic dream, in Greek *oneiros*, in Latin *somnium*; second, there is the prophetic vision, in Greek *horama*, in Latin *visio*; third, there is the oracular dream, in Greek *chrematismos*, in Latin *oraculum*; fourth, there is the nightmare, in Greek *enypnion*, in Latin *insomnium*; and last, the apparition, in Greek *phantasma*, which Cicero, when he has the occasion to use the word, calls *visum*.²¹¹

²⁰⁸Artemidorus also discusses theorematic and allegorical dreams in 4.1. For helpful studies on Artemidorus' dream theory, see Luther H. Martin, "Artemidorus: Dream Theory in Late Antiquity," *The Second Century* 8 (1991): 100-2; and Blum, *Studies in the Dream-Book of Artemidorus*, 52-91.

²⁰⁹Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.2.

²¹⁰Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.2.

²¹¹Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.2 (Stahl).

Like Artemidorus, Macrobius notes that the nightmare (ἐνύπνιον/*insomnium*) and apparition (φάντασμα/*visum*) are non-predictive and insignificant.²¹² The other three types of dreams, however, are discussed on the basis of their significance. The χρηματισμός/*oraculum* is a dream “in which a parent, or a pious or revered man, or a priest, or even a god clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, and what action to take or to avoid.”²¹³ The ὄραμα/*visio* is a “prophetic vision” of what actually will take place.²¹⁴ This type of dream corresponds to Artemidorus’ theorematic dream of a shipwreck. The ὄνειρος/*somnium* “conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding.”²¹⁵

Given Macrobius’ comments on the five-dream classification, Artemidorus’ treatment – or non-treatment – of the various dream types can now be explained. As already stated, the ἐνύπνιον and φάντασμα are non-predictive and signify nothing. The ὄραμα and χρηματισμός, on the other hand, are predictive and significant, but they are theorematic; that is, their meanings are straightforward and do not need interpretation. Only the ὄνειρος, being allegorical, requires interpretation, which is the focus of Artemidorus’

²¹²Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.3, 8.

²¹³Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.8 (Stahl).

²¹⁴Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.9.

²¹⁵Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.10 (Stahl).

Onirocritica. Thus, Artemidorus' dream classification is influenced by practical concerns and can be presented as follows:

ἐνύπνιοι - non-predictive/insignificant dreams
 ἐνύπνιον
 φάντασμα
 ὄνειροι - predictive/significant dreams
 ὄραμα - theorematic
 χρηματισμός - theorematic
 ὄνειρος - allegorical

In addition to the two- and five-class classification of dreams, there also existed a three-class system. The Stoic philosopher Posidonius put forth a three-class system of dreams, which is preserved by Cicero:

Now Posidonius holds the view that there are three ways in which men dream as the result of divine impulse (*deorum appulsu*): first, the soul (*animus*) is clairvoyant of itself because of its kinship with the gods; second, the air is full of immortal souls (*immortalium animorum*), already clearly stamped, as it were, with the marks of truth (*veritatis*); and third, the gods in person converse with men when they are asleep.²¹⁶

Several features of Posidonius' three-dream classification are to be noted. First, all three dream types are categorized under the designation *deorum appulsu*; therefore, all three dreams are predictive. There does, however, seem to be an increasing degree of immediacy with the divine: (1) the souls own divine nature, (2) the souls contact with other intermediary souls; and (3) the divine presence. Second, Posidonius' classification lacks specific labels or terms for each type of dream, which suggests an intention different from the technical concerns of

²¹⁶Cicero, *Div.* 1.64 (Falconer, LCL).

Artemidorus and Macrobius. Third, it is uncertain whether or not Posidonius included a category of non-predictive dreams.

Although there have been attempts to reconcile Posidonius' classification with the one of Artemidorus/Macrobius,²¹⁷ the two classifications do represent different approaches to dreams. Kessels contends that the two systems are answering two fundamentally different questions.²¹⁸ The five-class system of Artemidorus/Macrobius answers a practical question: Is a particular dream predictive or not; and if it is, does it require an interpretation (allegorical/enigmatic) or is it straightforward (theorematic)? The classification of Posidonius answers the question: "How is it possible that human beings (with the aid of God) are able to get a certain knowledge of the future in their dreams?"²¹⁹ Although Kessels seems correct in arguing for a distinction between the two dream classifications, it should be noted that at the *theoretical* level there is some commonality.

The three-class system of dreams is also attested by the Jewish philosopher Philo. At the beginning of both books 1 and 2 of his *De somniis*, Philo comments, and reviews, that his subject matter is God-sent dreams (θεοπέμπτοι ὄνειροι), of which there are three classes. His description of the three classes of θεοπέμπτοι ὄνειροι is as follows:

²¹⁷For example, Blum, *Studies in the Dream-Book of Artemidorus*, 67-71.

²¹⁸Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification," 399-400.

²¹⁹Kessels, "Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification," 400.

First class - "The treatise before this one embraced that first class of heaven-sent dreams (θεοπέμπτων ὀνείρων), in which, as we said, the Deity (τὸ θεῖον) of His own motion sends to us the visions (τὰς φαντασίας) which are presented to us in sleep."²²⁰ "The first kind [of dreams] we saw to be those in which God originates the movement and invisibly suggests this obscure to us but patent to Himself."²²¹ "[T]he Sacred Guide [i.e., Moses] gave a perfectly clear and lucid interpretation of the appearances (φαντασίας) which come under the first description, inasmuch as the intimations given by God through these dreams (ὀνείρων) were of the nature of plain oracles (χρησμοῖς)."²²²

Second class - "The second class [of dreams] is that in which our own mind (νοῦς), moving out of itself together with the Mind of the Universe, seems to be possessed and God-inspired (θεοφορεῖσθαι), and so capable of receiving some foretaste and foreknowledge of things to come."²²³ "[T]he second kind consisted [of dreams] in which our understanding (διανοίας) moves in concert with the soul of the Universe and becomes filled with divinely induced madness (θεοφορήτου μανίας), which is permitted to foretell many coming events."²²⁴

Third class - "This third kind [of dreams] arises whenever the soul (ἡ ψυχήν) in sleep, setting itself in motion and agitation of its own accord, becomes frenzied, and with the prescient power due to such inspiration foretells the future."²²⁵ "The appearances (φαντασίαι) of the third kind being more obscure than the former, owing to the deep and impenetrable nature of the riddle (αἰνιγμα) involved in them, demanded a scientific skill in discerning the meaning of the dreams (τῆς ὀνειροκριτικῆς ἐπιστήμης)."²²⁶

²²⁰Philo, *Somn.* 1.1 (Colson, LCL).

²²¹Philo, *Somn.* 2.2 (Colson, LCL; brackets added).

²²²Philo, *Somn.* 2.3 (Colson, LCL).

²²³Philo, *Somn.* 1.2 (Colson, LCL; brackets added).

²²⁴Philo, *Somn.* 2.2 (Colson, LCL; brackets added).

²²⁵Philo, *Somn.* 2.1 (Colson, LCL; brackets added).

²²⁶Philo, *Somn.* 2.4 (Colson, LCL).

Philo's overarching category for the dreams found in Genesis is θεοπέμπτοι, which seems to be a semi-technical term used in the dream literature of antiquity. We have already seen this term used in Herophilus' dream classification, where it has the general sense of predictive dreams. It also seems to be synonymous with Posidonius' *deorum appulsu*. Artemidorus uses the term θεόπεπμτα to describe predictive dreams as opposed to "anxiety-dreams and petitionary dreams," which belong to the ἐνύπνιον class.²²⁷ Interestingly, he quickly qualifies his comments by stating:

I do not, like Aristotle, inquire as to whether the cause of our dreaming is outside of us and comes from the gods or whether it is motivated by something within, which disposes the soul in a certain way and causes a natural event to happen to it. Rather, I use the word in the same way that we customarily call all unforeseen things god-sent (θεόπεπμτα).²²⁸

Thus, Philo's use of the term θεοπέμπτοι is another indicator that his *De somniis* functions within the dream literature of the Greco-Roman world. As such, the term θεοπέμπτοι should not be interpreted in an overly Jewish-theological sense. It simply means predictive dreams, which can either originate from the divine or from the soul itself.

Philo's dream classification has been shown to share a common tradition with Posidonius' classification. Philo's particular expression of these dream classes, however, requires comment. The term χρησμός may be one term that

²²⁷Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.6 (White).

²²⁸Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.6 (White; text Pack).

Philo uses *χρησμός* distinctively in relation to dreams, although it is used only once in reference to dreams; all other occurrences of *χρησμός* in *De somniis* are in reference to Scripture, usually a quotation.²²⁹ In *De somniis* 2.3, Philo further describes the first class of dreams:

[T]he Sacred Guide [i.e., Moses] gave a perfectly clear and lucid interpretation of the appearances (*φαντασίας*) which come under the first description, inasmuch as the intimations given by God through these dreams (*ὀνειρώων*) were of the nature of plain oracles (*χρησμοῖς*).

Two inferences can be drawn from this characterization of the first class of dreams. First, Philo's *χρησμός* seems to correspond to the *χρηματισμός* of Artemidorus/Macrobius, "in which a parent, or a pious or revered man, or a priest, or even a god clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, and what action to take or to avoid."²³⁰ If the dreams of Abimelech (Gen. 20:3-7) and Laban (Gen. 31:24) were indeed the dreams treated in the lost work, Philo's *χρησμός* would correspond well to God's "speaking" in those dreams. As such, and this is our second inference, Philo's first class of dreams would be considered theomatic; that is, a dream that needs no interpretation.

The subject of interpretation leads to another observation about Philo's dream categories. It is only with the third category of dreams that Philo connects the skill of dream interpretation. In *De somniis* 2.4, he characterizes this class of dreams as an enigma and states that they require "scientific dream

²²⁹Philo, *Somn.* 1.159; 1.172; 1.177; 1.207 (no quotation); 1.247; 2.142; 2.221; 2.297.

²³⁰Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.8 (Stahl).

interpretation" (τῆς ὄνειροκριτικῆς ἐπιστήμης). When interpreting the dream of Joseph (Gen. 37:9), which is a third class dream, Philo again is concerned with "how the rules of dream-interpretation (ὄνειροκριτικῆ τέξνῃ) explain it."²³¹ This dream class parallels the enigmatic dream (ὄνειρος/*somnium*) of Artemidorus/Macrobius, which "conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding."²³² Therefore, Philo's third class is allegorical.

What about Philo's second class of dreams? In *De somniis* 2.3, he states that they are enigmatic (ἀινιγματώδης), "but the riddle was not in very high degree concealed from the quick-sighted." For Philo, the virtuous soul is able to perceive the truth or meaning in these dreams that originate from the soul's interaction with the divine intermediary, whether angels,²³³ the archangel,²³⁴ or the logos.²³⁵ Thus, the virtuous dreamer needs no aid in interpretation for the second class of dreams, for they are theorematic.

Philo's classification of dreams, then, can be compared to Artemidorus' functional design:

²³¹Philo, *Somn.* 2.110 (Colson, LCL).

²³²Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* 3.10 (Stahl).

²³³Philo, *Somn.* 1.148.

²³⁴Philo, *Somn.* 1.157.

²³⁵Philo, *Somn.* 1.190; 1.230.

<u>Artemidorus</u>	<u>Philo</u>
ὄνειροι - predictive dreams	Θεοπέμπτοι ὄνειροι - predictive dreams
ὄραμα - theomatic	First class - theomatic
χρηματισμός - theomatic	Second class - theomatic
ὄνειρος - allegorical	Third class - allegorical

Thus, Philo's dream classification has a practical correlation with the dream theory of Artemidorus/Macrobious and a formal one with the dream classification of Posidonius.²³⁶

The three-class system of dreams is also attested by the Christian writer Tertullian in his *De anima*, yet reflecting a Christian apologetic perspective.²³⁷ Tertullian's classification of dreams emphasizes their origin. The first category of dreams has their origin in demons. Tertullian has in view here the common, prevalent understanding and experience of pagan dream divination. Though these dreams sometimes prove true and helpful,²³⁸ their ultimate purpose is to deceive and harm because they distract attention from and recognition of the one true God.²³⁹ Christians are not immune to dream devices of the demonic. Tertullian's second class of dreams originates from God. These dreams are

²³⁶It should be noted that Philo seems to refer to insignificant dreams in 2.105; 2.133; 2.162.

²³⁷J. H. Waszink, *Tertulliani De Animia* (Amsterdam: J. M. Meulenhoff, 1947), 502.

²³⁸Tertullian, *An.* 47.1.

²³⁹Tertullian, *An.* 46.12.

“honest, holy, prophetic, inspired, instructive, and inviting to virtue;”²⁴⁰ and can be received by non-Christians alike. Based on other writings, Tertullian is particularly interested in how God-sent dreams function in a disciplinary or admonishing way for Christians.²⁴¹ For example, in his treatise *De idolatria*, Tertullian gives example of how a Christian was chastised in a dream because his servants had adorned the gates of his house, a gesture of honoring “entrance” gods.²⁴² Although not stated explicitly, Tertullian’s interpretive guide for distinguishing demonic dreams from God-sent dreams seems to be something like the rule of faith. The third class of dreams has a naturalistic origin in the activity of the soul.²⁴³ When the body is at sleep, the soul remains active because of its connection with the power of *ecstasis*. Even though the experiences of anxiety, joy, and sorrow are experienced in these dreams, they are illusions and insignificant.

The various classifications and theories of dreams were attempts to explain the origin and phenomena of significant and insignificant dreams. Significant dreams were primarily of two kinds: (1) a message dream, in which a god, divine being, or authoritative person communicated a message to the dreamer; and (2) a symbolic dream that needed interpreting, whether from a

²⁴⁰Tertullian, *An.* 47.2 (ANF 3:225-6).

²⁴¹Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, 66-7.

²⁴²Tertullian, *Idol.* 15; for other punitive dreams see also *Spect.* 26 and *Virg.* 17.

²⁴³Tertullian, *An.* 45.1-6; 47.3.

professional dream interpreter or by oneself. Non-significant dreams are attributed to the activity of the soul in response to the circumstances of one's life.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that dreams and their interpretation were a fixture of Greco-Roman religion and functioned in the various aspects of it: divination, magic, and cults. So established were dreams in the context of religion that an intellectual tradition developed in order to explain and understand the phenomenon as a part of the human experience. Given this social context of dreams, an ancient reader would read a narrative that contains dream reports with a worldview that accepted and valued dreams as a mode of divine communication. Indeed, this social context of dreams no doubt had an affect on the literary tradition of the Greco-Roman world. It is to this literary tradition of dreams that I now investigate.

CHAPTER THREE

The Ancient, Literary Context of Dreams, Part I: The Script of Dreams

Whereas the previous chapter described the social construction of dreams in the Greco-Roman world, in the present chapter, and the following one, I will analyze dreams as a literary convention in Greco-Roman literature. No doubt the social and literary contexts of dreams are intrinsically related to and inform one another, for the social construction of dreams provides the *realia* from which literary dreams initiate their meaning and value. E. R. Dodds makes a similar observation in his cultural description of dreams in ancient Greece, though his concerns move in the opposite direction to establish the “cultural-pattern” of dreams:

In light of this evidence we must, I think, recognise that the stylisation of the “divine dream” or *chrematismos* is not purely literary; it . . . belongs to the religious experience of the people, though poets from Homer downwards have adapted it to their literary purposes by using it as a literary motif.¹

Dodds’ characterization of dreams as a literary motif adapted to the literary purposes of ancient poets reflects the consensus of modern scholarship.

¹E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 108. Cf. also Dario Del Corno, “Dreams and their Interpretation in Ancient Greece,” *BICS* 29 (1982): 57, who recognizes the literary character of dreams in Homer yet notes their obvious, even necessary, correlation with the public experience of dreams.

Modern scholarship has appropriately recognized the literary dimension of dreams, particularly in the study of Greco-Roman epic and dramatic poetry.² Already in the early twentieth century, the classicist William Stuart Messer emphasized the literary quality of dreams in his study of Homer and the Greek tragedies. Messer showed how the Homeric dream is an “artistic literary device” that advances the narrative plot at critical moments and provides a means of divine action.³ He further states that dreams in the Greek tragedies, though adapted to the dramatic form, are “an imitation, more or less direct, of the dreams used by Homer.”⁴ Serving as a kind of bookend to Messer’s study, Christine Walde has more recently analyzed dreams as a literary motif in Greek and Latin poetry, from Homer to Lucan. Walde recognizes, on the one hand, that dreams display a set of formal features that characterize the literary dream as conventional. But on the other hand, literary dreams of ancient poetry have a

²William Stuart Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (Columbia University Studies in Classical Philology; New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), 1-102; Reckford, Kenneth J. Reckford, “Catharsis and Dream-Interpretation in Aristophane’s *Wasps*,” *TAPA* 107 (1977): 283-312; A. H. M. Kessels, “Dreams in Apollonius’ *Argonautica*,” in *Actus: Studies in Honour of H. L. W. Nelson* (ed. H. L. W. Nelson, J. den Boeft, and A. H. M. Kessels; Utrecht: Instituut vor Klassieke Talen, 1982), 155-173; James F. Morris, “‘Dream Scenes’ in Homer: A Study in Variation.” *TAPA* 113 (1983): 39-54; Joachim Latacz, “Funktionen des Traums in der antiken Literatur,” in *Traum und Träumen: Traumanalysen in Wissenschaft, Religion und Kunst* (ed. T. Wagner-Simon und G. Benedetti; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 20-27; Christine Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung* (Leipzig: K. G. Saur München, 2001), 1-433.

³Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, vii and 47-52.

⁴Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 57.

narrative versatility that allows authors to employ dreams for a multiplicity of literary strategies and to adapt them to the specific narrative of each author.⁵

The analysis of dreams as a literary convention will focus on Greco-Roman prose literature, which no doubt was influenced by the poetic tradition.⁶ My understanding of literary convention is informed by Robert Alter, who in his influential book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981), introduced to biblical (Old Testament) studies the concept of literary convention as employed by modern literary critics. Alter explains that a literary convention is a “tacit agreement between the artist and audience about the ordering of the art work.”⁷ This “tacit agreement” generates a set of expectations about structure, sequence, and the organization of motifs along a range of literary levels, from the macro-level of a

⁵Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung*, esp. 3-4 and 417-420. The following statement is representative: “Von der Warte des antiken Dichters aus zeichnet den Traum als literarisches Motiv sowohl hohe Individualität als auch hohe Anpassungsfähigkeit, sowohl Schlichtheit als auch höchste Komplexität aus. Das Motiv erfüllt also gleichzeitig die Kriterien ‚Nicht austauschbar‘ und ‚vielfältig verwendbar‘. Was den Traum so leicht handhabbar macht, führt allerdings dazu, daß ihn die Interpreten der literarischen Kunstwerke oft übersehen oder als konventionell abstempeln“ (417-418).

⁶Walde, *Die Traumdarstellungen in der griechisch-römischen Dichtung*, 4. See also Peter Frisch, *Die Träume bei Herodot* (BKP 27; Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1968), 49-52.

⁷Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 4. See also Alter’s “How Convention Helps Us Read: The Case of the Bible’s Annunciation Type-Scene,” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 115-119.

text's genre⁸ to the micro-level of structural phrases and word-plays. These expectations, of course, can be variously satisfied or even subverted, depending on how the author utilizes literary conventions. But in the end, the effect of a literary convention is determined by the shared, inherited literary praxes of both the author and audience. As modern readers of ancient literature, the ability to identify these literary conventions is paramount to reading these texts as an ancient audience would have.⁹ In demonstrating dreams as a literary convention, this chapter will advance by investigating what I call the *script of dreams*, while the following chapter will illustrate the various literary functions of dreams.

The phrase *script of dreams* intends to convey several meanings in relation to dreams as a literary convention. First, it emphasizes the written, literary representation of dreams. Having described the social function of dreams in chapter two, it is important to underscore that dreams also had a literary

⁸For a discussion of convention and expectation for the issue of genre, see Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 32-36.

⁹Alter's characterization of this necessity is helpful: "Reading any body of literature involves a specialized mode of perception in which every culture trains its members from childhood. As modern readers of the Bible, we need to relearn something of *this mode of perception that was second nature to the original audiences*. Instead of relegating every perceived recurrence in the text to the limbo of duplicated sources or fixed folkloric archetypes, we may begin to see that the resurgence of certain pronounced patterns at certain narrative junctures was *conventionally anticipated, even counted on, and that against that ground of anticipation the biblical authors set words, motifs, themes, personages, and actions into an elaborate dance of significant innovation*" (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 62 [emphasis added]).

dimension and that this literary quality of dreams was recognized in antiquity. Second, the script of dreams expresses the fact that literary dreams follow a conventional form or pattern; there is something of a “script” to how one narrates or reports dreams in ancient literature. And thirdly, though the literary representation of dreams exhibits a formal pattern, dreams as a literary unit could be adapted, or “scripted,” for a range of literary functions. While chapter four will illustrate the specific functions of literary dreams, this chapter will include a section that explores this creative aspect of scripting dreams. The script of dreams, as nuanced by these comments, will be examined more fully by analyzing (1) the literary form of dreams, (2) the rhetoric of dreams, and (3) the literary inventiveness of dreams.

The Literary Form of Dreams

As stated above, Robert Alter brought to Old Testament studies the modern literary concept of convention. It is interesting to note that his comments concerning literary convention actually served as a prelude to his discussion and analysis of one particular literary convention: the “type-scene.”¹⁰ As noted by Alter, “type-scene” is a term first used by Walter Arend in Homeric studies and refers to a literary unit that displays “certain prominent elements of a repetitive compositional pattern.”¹¹ One of the type-scenes identified by Arend, but not

¹⁰Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, ch. 3.

¹¹Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 50.

discussed by Alter, was the “dream scene.”¹² Subsequent scholarship¹³ has refined Arend’s analysis and has identified the elements of the Homeric dream scene as follows, which is illustrated by the dream of Penelope in the *Odyssey* (4.786–5.2):

Reference to night & retirement of the dreamer: “evening” came and Penelope “lay there in her upper chamber” (4.789).

Description of the dreamer’s mental state: Penelope did not eat or drink, “pondering whether her peerless son would escape death” (4.789-90).

Sending & arrival of the dream figure: “[Athena] sent [the phantom] to the house of diving Odysseus. . . . So into the chamber it passed by the thong of the bolt” (4.795-802).

Likeness of the dream figure: “[Athena] made a phantom, and likened it in form to a woman, Iphthime, daughter of great-hearted Icarus” (4.796-798).

Position of the dream figure: “. . . and [the phantom] stood above her head” (4.803).

Message of the dream figure (which may include a dialogue with the dreamer): “and [the phantom] said, ‘Sleepest thou, Penelope, thy heart sore stricken? Nay, the gods that live at ease suffer thee not to weep or be distressed, seeing that thy son is yet to return; for in no wise is he a sinner in the eyes of the gods” (4.804-837).

Departure of the dream figure: “So saying the phantom glided away by the bolt of the door into the breath of the winds” (4.838-439a).

Reaction of the dreamer: “And [Penelope] started up from sleep, and her heart was warmed with comfort, that so clear a vision had sped to her in the darkness of night” (4.439b-841).

¹² Walter Arend, *Die typischen Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933), 61-63.

¹³ See David M. Gunn, “Thematic Composition and Homeric Authorship,” *HSCP* 75 (1971): 15-17; and Morris, “‘Dream Scenes’ in Homer,” 39-54.

This bare listing of formal features obscures Homer's highly stylized language and the elaboration of some features. These repetitive compositional elements, however, are consistently present, and for Homeric scholars the dream scene represents a discernible literary convention in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*.¹⁴

The epics of Homer, however, are not the only literary works that represent dreams according to a formal pattern. If the study of literary dreams were broadened beyond Homer, it would be observed that dreams are found throughout the varied literary genres of the Greco-Roman period; and yet, the formal features of the dream narrative are fairly consistent and comparable to Homeric dreams.¹⁵ This consistent pattern of dreams in the various literature of the Greco-Roman world has been aptly demonstrated by John Hanson.¹⁶ For

¹⁴For the significance of type-scenes in Homer, see Mark W. Edwards, "Homer and Oral Tradition: the type-scene," *Oral Tradition* 7 (1992): 283-330.

¹⁵Cf. Frances Flannery-Daily, who, in her ambitious study of dreams in Ancient Near Eastern, Greek and Roman, and Hellenistic Jewish literature, adopts the form-critical work of Leo Oppenheim and discovers a "surprisingly standardized [pattern] across many cultures for millennia" ("Standing at the Head of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity" [Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2000], 1, see chs. 1-2); and John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.2:1396: "Especially in formal, literary ways, the fundamental character of dream-vision reports does not significantly change from the Homeric poets to the end of late antiquity. Further, there are striking parallels between dream-vision materials of the Hellenistic and Roman periods and those of earlier cultures such as Assyria, Egypt, and Israel."

¹⁶Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1395-1427.

now, it is sufficient to summarize Hanson's conclusions; his formal critical work will be employed in our analysis of literary dreams in the following chapter.

Hanson identifies four formal features of the dream narrative: (1) scene-setting, (2) dream-vision terminology, (3) dream-vision proper, and (4) reaction and/or response.¹⁷ Hanson uses the term "dream-vision" because it more precisely communicates the fact that the literary form of dreams and waking visions are practically indistinguishable. Moreover, dreams and waking visions constitute a similar phenomenon. But this terminology is cumbersome, and so I will simply use the term "dream."

The dream narrative begins with (1) the *scene-setting*, which can include (a) the identification of the dreamer, along with a sketch of his or her character, (b) the place where the dream occurs, (c) the time in which the dream occurs, (d) the mental state of the dreamer, and (e) the activity of sleeping. As Hanson states, "The degree of detail in this section can vary considerably, depending on numerous possible factors, including the literary context, general purpose of the report, or the particular interest of the narrator."¹⁸

After the scene-setting, the dream narrative usually signifies the dream phenomena by some (2) *dream terminology*.¹⁹ While ὄναρ, ὄνειρος, and ἐνύπνιον

¹⁷Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1400-1413.

¹⁸Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1405.

¹⁹Hanson notes that the dream-vision term may also be found in other parts of the dream scene; Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1407, n. 49.

are the most common terms for dreams, other synonyms are employed, such as ὄραμα, ὄψις, φάσμα, φάντασμα, φαντασία, ἀποκάλυψις, ἐπιφάνεια, εἰκῶν, and ὄπτασία.²⁰ In addition to the dream terminology, the dream proper is often introduced by δοκέω (ἐδόκει/ἔδοξε). The five sample texts that Hanson uses to demonstrate the form of the dream narrative employ the following terms/phrases: ἐγένετο ὄναρ τοιόνδε: ἐδόκει (“this following dream happened: it seemed”; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4, 34); ἔδοξε καθ’ ὑπ<ν>ον (“it seemed during sleep”; *IG X*, 2, fasc. 1, no. 255); κατακοιμηθεὶς δὲ νύκτωρ ἐδόκει (“and having fallen asleep at night it seemed”; Plutarch, *Luc.* 12, 1); ὄψιν εἶδεν ἀλλόκοτον. ἐδόκει. . . (“he saw a strange vision/apparition. It seemed. . .”; Plutarch, *Eum.* 6, 4); and ὄραμα διὰ νυκτὸς (“a vision during the night”; Acts 16:9).

Hanson divides (3) the *dream proper* into three types: audio-visual dream, auditory dream, and visual dream. The audio-visual dream has both the appearance of a dream figure and what the dream figure says or indicates. Formal features associated with the dream figure are (a) the identification of the dream figure, (b) the description of the dream figure, and/or (c) the position of the dream figure in relation to the dreamer (e.g., “at the head of,” “standing over,” or “standing by” the dreamer). After (d) the message is given, sometimes (e) the departure of the dream figure is noted. I will refer to this type of dream as

²⁰Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1407-8.

a visitant dream, because the dream figure visits the dreamer to impart some message. The auditory dream is a dream-vision in which something is only heard. One could argue that the auditory dream is simply a condensed version of the visitant dream, since the voice of the dream figure is usually identified.²¹ The visual dream is commonly identified as an allegorical or symbolic dream, which calls for an interpretation. In this type of dream a scene or set of occurrences is described. If there are dream figures, they are simply part of the scene being described. For the most part, this classification of dreams holds true; but in certain cases a blurring of the lines can occur.

The dream narrative concludes with a description of the dreamer's (4) *reaction and/or response*. The dreamer's reaction can include waking, amazement, perplexity, fear, etc. The dreamer's reaction may also include some process of interpretation. The dreamer's response is "simply the direct action that the dreamer is depicted as taking in consequence of the dream-vision proper."²² Thus, the form of the dream narrative can be outlined as follows:

1. *Scene-setting*
 - a. identification of dreamer, along with a sketch of his or her character
 - b. place
 - c. time
 - d. mental state of dreamer

²¹Even if the dream figure is not identified, a dream figure seems to be assumed. This assumption stands behind R.G.A. van Lieshout's statement that there is "not one example of an exclusively auditive dream-experience in classical Greek references to dreaming" (*Greeks on Dreams* [Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1980], 24).

²²Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1413.

- e. sleep
- 2. *Dream Terminology*
- 3. *Dream proper* (three types) - often introduced by δοκεῖν
 - a. Visitant dream - dream figure visits to deliver message
 - i. identification of dream figure
 - ii. description of dream figure
 - iii. position of dream figure
 - iv. message
 - v. departure of dream figure
 - b. Auditory dream - dream message only heard
 - c. Symbolic dream - scene or event described; interpretation required
- 4. *Reaction and/or Response* of dreamer

In summary, dreams in Greco-Roman literature are narrated or reported according to a formal pattern, which includes scene-setting, dream terminology, the dream proper, and reaction/response. Though all the sub-features of these major elements may not appear in every dream representation, the dream narrative clearly represents a compositional pattern that ancient audiences would recognize and expect. Thus, the literary form of dreams contributes to our understanding of dreams as a literary convention.

The Rhetoric of Dreams

The literary quality of dreams can also be explored by considering dreams in the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition. Before analyzing dreams in Greco-Roman rhetoric, however, it is important to clarify the relationship between Greco-Roman rhetoric and literature and answer a fundamental methodological question: How does the study of Greco-Roman rhetoric contribute to the analysis of ancient literary praxis? This issue is best addressed by considering

the sources of the rhetorical tradition: the Greek progymnasmata and the rhetorical handbooks.

The Greek progymnasmata are preliminary, rhetorical exercises for children in antiquity before they received formal education in rhetoric. More than just preparation for an education in rhetoric, however, the progymnasmata set forth a curriculum for prose composition, prescribing writing exercises for basic literary forms such as the fable, narrative, comparison, chreia, speech in character, and encomium, to mention a few. This education in prose composition bears upon the wider literary activity of antiquity, as stated by the author of the earliest extant progymnasmata, Theon:

Now I have included these remarks, not thinking that all are useful to all beginners, but in order that we may know that training in exercises is absolutely useful not only to those who are going to practice rhetoric but also if one wishes to undertake the function of poets or historians or any other writers. These things are, as it were, the foundation of every kind of discourse²³

Moreover, the Greek progymnasmata are not only prescriptive in the sense of setting forth exercises, but they are also descriptive in terms of depicting how classical authors employed the various compositional forms. As such, the progymnasmata represent a form of ancient literary criticism, analyzing classical literature in light of the compositional exercises. This

²³Theon, *Progym.* 70 (Kennedy, 13). Cf. also George A. Kennedy's remarks that the progymnasmata presented an "understanding of conventional literary forms for those who entered on literature as a career or as an elegant pastime" (Introduction to *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* [ed. and trans. George A. Kennedy; SBLWAW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], ix).

descriptive character of the progymnasmata also reveals the traditional nature of these literary-rhetorical exercises: the progymnasmata are not innovative but illustrative of time-honored rhetorical-literary practices. Thus, the Greek progymnasmata provide an essential resource for studying the literary-rhetorical conventions and values of antiquity.

The rhetorical handbooks are to be used more cautiously. Their primary purpose is training for public speeches, especially in the courtroom. But even here, one can find numerous references and quotes from ancient authors used as examples of what the rhetoricians seek to illustrate. Attention should always be given to the context and purpose of a statement in the handbooks.

In the Greco-Roman rhetorical traditions, specific references to dreams are found in discussions of encomium and style. This section will proceed by looking at dreams in relation to these two subjects.

Dreams and Encomiastic Rhetoric

Encomium is treated by the rhetors as both a speech, along with judicial and deliberative speeches, and a compositional exercise of the progymnasmata. It is characterized variously as the exposition of the virtues and greatness of persons, animals, or inanimate objects, though persons are the more common subject. In the encomium of a person, one begins with certain *topoi*, such as origin and birth. Given their divinatory nature, dreams are sometimes recommended for developing the birth *topos*.

So, Hermogenes instructs, “You will mention also any marvelous (θαύματος) occurrences at birth, for example from dreams (ὄνειράτων) or signs (συμβόλων) or things like that.”²⁴ Nicolaus mentions specific examples of dreams in relation to the birth *topos*:

After these remarks about origin we shall come to the circumstances of his birth; for example, if there is something we can say about him at the time of his mother’s birth pains, as it is said of the mother of Pericles, Agariste, that a god told her in a dream that she would give birth to a lion, or the tradition about the mother of Cyrus about the vine and the flood of water in a dream. Many such stories have been passed down to us; for example, about Evagoras, the king of Cyprus, and others.²⁵

In his treatise on the imperial encomium speech, Menander the Rhetor refers to dreams in a similar fashion:

After country and family, then, let the third heading, as we have said, be ‘birth’, and if any divine sign (σύμβολον) occurred at the time of his birth, either on land or in the heavens or on the sea, compare the circumstances with those of Romulus, Cyrus, and similar stories, since in these cases also there were miraculous happenings (τινὰ θαυμάσια) connected with their births – the dream of Cyrus’ mother, the suckling of Romulus by the she-wolf. If there is anything like this in connection with the emperor, work it up (ἐξέργασαι); if it is possible to invent (πλάσσει), and to do this convincingly, do not hesitate; the subject (ὑπόθεσις) permits this, because the audience has no choice but to accept the encomium without examination.²⁶

These rhetoricians present dreams as an illustration of how the birth *topos* of an encomium can be expressed. In the case of Nicolaus, dreams are the only examples offered to demonstrate the birth *topos*. It should be noted that the

²⁴Hermogenes, *Progym.* 7.22-24 [15] (trans. Kennedy, 82; text Rabe).

²⁵Nicolaus, *Progym.* 8 [51-52] (Kennedy, 157).

²⁶Menander, *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 2.371 (Russell and Wilson, 80-83).

traditions of these notable dreams are for the most part found in literary works, The dream concerning Cyrus's mother, for example, is reported by Herodotus in his *Histories* (1.107.2) as a part of an introduction to the story of Cyrus. The dream of Pericles's mother is included at the beginning of Plutarch's biography of Pericles (3.2), a beginning that is clearly reflective of the encomium tradition.²⁷ Thus, as a motif of the birth *topos* dreams contribute to the rhetoric of encomium, in both prose literature and speeches, by signifying the future greatness of an individual.

Dreams and Rhetorical Style

Dreams are also offered as examples in discussions of rhetorical style. As part of his treatise on the imperial encomium, Menander the Rhetor deals with an informal type of speech called the "talk" (λαλιά). The "talk," being informal, is characterized by its disregard for any technical rules of order and its "charming" (ἡδονή) and "sweet" (γλυκυτής) style.²⁸ In contrast to a more sophisticated style that uses periods and enthymemes, this "sweet" style is "simpler and plainer" (ἀπλουστέρα καὶ ἀφελεστέρα) like Xenophon, Philostratus, and Herodotus, which are "full of pleasant narratives" (γλυκέων

²⁷Before noting the dream of Pericles's mother, Plutarch tells about Pericles's homeland and ancestry, which are consistent elements of the origin *topos* (Plutarch, *Per* 3.1).

²⁸Menander, *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 2.389 (Russell and Wilson, 116).

διηγημάτων).²⁹ Dream reports reflect this “sweet” style, and so Menander instructs that “one also ought to invent dreams” (χρή δὲ καὶ ὄνειρατα πλάττειν) when composing the “talk.”³⁰

The significance of Menander’s comments for our study is two-fold. First, Menander clearly contributes to our analysis of the script of dreams by providing an ancient perspective on their literary character: the reporting of dreams is associated with a style that is characteristic of the prose narrative of Xenophon and Herodotus. Second, Menander encourages the invention of dreams for an informal type of speech that has been regarded as “essentially ‘literature.’”³¹ Russell and Wilson continue by stating, “[T]he practice of the *lalia* certainly made it possible for writers to handle a wide variety of topics in an imaginable and untrammelled [*sic.*] way.”³² Along with inventing fables,³³ quoting the poets, and using the stories, apophthegms, and proverbs of Plutarch’s *Lives*,³⁴ the invention of dreams also contributes to this “imaginable” quality of the “talk.”

²⁹Menander, Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν 2.389 (Russell and Wilson, 116-117).

³⁰Menander, Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν 2.390 (modified trans. of Russell and Wilson, 116-117). Russell and Wilson render *χρή* rather weakly as “one may.”

³¹D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 121.

³²Russell and Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, 121.

³³Menander, Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν 2.390 (Russell and Wilson, 118-119).

³⁴Menander, Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν 2.392-3 (Russell and Wilson, 122-123).

Discussion of dreams and style is also given by John of Sardis in his *Commentary of the Progymnasmata of Aphthonius*.³⁵ In elaborating on Aphthonius' statement that the compositional form ekphrasis should have a "relaxed" (ἀνειμένως) style, John states in language similar to Menander that the style should be "sweet (ἡδύς) and relaxed, without periods and enthymemes."³⁶ After demonstrating this relaxed style with examples from Thucydides, Xenophon, and Herodotus, he concludes by stating,

This simple style also invites poetic license (αὐτονομίαν ποιητικῆν), such as describing the gods descending from heaven and ascending and engaging in dialogue – the source of Herodotus' description of the gods as kings of Egypt – and inventing dreams and oracles (ὀνείρους τε πλάττεται καὶ χρησμούς).³⁷

The comments of John of Sardis are suggestive in several ways. First, like Menander, John of Sardis mentions dreams in the discussion of a style that is characteristic of prose, narrative literature. The association of dreams with this

³⁵This work attributed to John of Sardis dates from the ninth century, a time-frame which raises questions about its use for a study of Hellenistic literature. The commentary, however, is in actuality a compilation of previous commentaries (see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, xii). More importantly, though, Ronald Hock has made the case that John of Sardis is a valuable resource for those studying the progymnasmata, because it provides an ancient explanation of why Aphthonius "defined, classified, and illustrated as he did" (Ronald Hock, "Why We Should Read the Commentaries on Aphthonius' Progymnasmata" [paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, Pa., 19 November 2005]). John of Sardis, then, also provides an ancient prospective on the literary nature of dreams.

³⁶John of Sardis, *Comm. in Aphthonii Progym.* 37, 21 [223] (Kennedy, 218; text Rabe).

³⁷John of Sardis, *Comm. in Aphthonii Progym.* 37, 21 [224] (modified trans. of Kennedy, 219; text Rabe).

kind of literary analysis of Thucydides, Xenophon, and Herodotus draws attention to the literary aspect of dreams. Second, John of Sardis states that this style permits literary creativity (ποιητικός) and specifically mentions the invention of dreams. This feature will be discussed further in the next section.

Summary

In summary, a study of dreams in the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition demonstrates that dreams were occasionally part of discussions that focused on literary-rhetorical issues. This context of literary-rhetorical analysis highlights the literary character of dreams and suggests that ancient auditors also understood that dreams have a literary dimension and reflect certain literary-rhetorical practices. Thus, this survey of dreams and Greco-Roman rhetoric supports my proposal concerning the script of dreams; that is, the literary dimension of dreams was recognized by ancient authors. The rhetoricians also make several references to the invention of dreams, and it is to this subject that I now turn.

The Inventiveness of Dreams

The investigation of the rhetoric of dreams revealed several references to the invention of dreams; that is, the report or narration of a dream is the creative invention of the author. Two remarks suggest that the invention of dreams was quite widespread. First, in his encomium of Evagoras, Isocrates offers a

convoluted statement as to why he has decided not to comment on the birth of Evagoras, though he believes there is much to say:

I prefer to say nothing of the portents, the oracles, the visions that come in sleep (τὰς μὲν φήμας καὶ τὰς μαντείας καὶ τὰς ὄψεις τὰς ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις γενομένας), from which the impression might be gained that he was of superhuman birth, not because I disbelieve the reports, but that I may make it clear to all that I am so far from resorting to invention (πλασάμενος) in speaking of his deeds that even of those matters which are in fact true I dismiss such as are known only to the few and of which not all the citizens are cognizant.³⁸

Isocrates seems to be reacting to the fact that, not only are dreams a conventional motif for encomium, but the invention of dreams – as well as other forms of divination – are common as well. The hesitancy of Isocrates to develop the birth *topos* is based on the anticipated reaction of his audience: the mentioning of dreams may ring hollow with his audience because of the regular practice of inventing dreams. This sentiment is explicitly mentioned by Quintilian, who in his discussion of the *narratio* states that “dreams and superstitions have long since lost their value, owing to the very ease with which they can be invented.”³⁹

These statements, along with the comments from the previous section on the rhetoric of dreams, indicate that the invention of dreams was a common practice in Greco-Roman rhetoric, which in turn may reflect a similar practice in Greco-Roman literature. Cicero already recognized the inventiveness of dreams in poetic literature, acknowledging that the dreams found in Greek and Roman

³⁸Isocrates, *Evag.* 9.21 (modified trans. of Norlin, LCL).

³⁹Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.94 (Butler, LCL).

poetry are fictional (*ficta a poëta*; “a fiction of the poet”) and belong to the world of fable or myth (*somina fabularum*; “dreams of fables”).⁴⁰ This section, in turn, will tentatively explore the inventiveness of dreams in prose narratives as a way further to demonstrate the script of dreams. The inventiveness of dreams does not negate the reporting of actual dreams or the transmitting of traditions about notable dreams, but it does highlight the creative venue that dreams attract and thus their *literary* representation.⁴¹ This exploration will proceed by considering literary imitation of dreams, Homeric quotes and allusions in dreams, the double-dream, and dreams in “Rewritten Bible.”

Literary Imitation of Dreams

Given the formal, conventional pattern of dream reports, it is difficult to demonstrate a dream narrative as an imitation of another literary dream.⁴² This

⁴⁰Cicero, *Div.* 1.40-43.

⁴¹Hanson’s assessment is instructive here: “Whether or not these literary reports have a historical basis is in most cases an irresolvable question. The accepted mode of narrating a dream or vision determines the memory or imagination of dreamers and literati alike. As a result, it is difficult to move from the literary level to actual experience, even if some of the dream-vision reports correspond to some reality” (“Dreams and Visions,” 1400-1401).

⁴²Recognizing the difficulty of identifying imitation in specific texts, Dennis R. MacDonald has created six criteria for determining the presence of literary imitation: accessibility, analogy, density, sequencing of motifs, distinctive traits, and interpretability. MacDonald applies these criteria to show how the New Testament authors (Mark and Luke) imitated Homer. Many of MacDonald’s conclusions, however, fail to convince primarily because he does not satisfy his own criteria or in the end some criteria are simply too subjective. See his two major works: *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven:

difficulty notwithstanding, I want to survey two dream narratives that have been considered literary imitations.

The first illustration of literary imitation comes from Herodotus's narration of the dreams of Xerxes (*Hist.* 7). It is widely held that Herodotus has modeled this account after the dream of Agamemnon in the *Iliad* 2.⁴³ In both accounts, a warrior-king has a dream that compels them to enter into a military campaign, which only ends in disastrous consequences. Having already decided not to wage war against the Greeks, the Persian king Xerxes dreams that a "tall and handsome man stood over [him]" (7.12) and counseled him to invade the Greeks "at once" (7.14). To emphasize this decision as the will of the divine, Herodotus narrates two more dream scenes that have the same dream figure repeating the same instruction, again to Xerxes and once to his uncle Artabanus

Yale University Press, 2000) and *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?: Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). For a thorough critique of MacDonald's reading of the New Testament, see Karl Olav Sandnes, *Imitatio Homeri?: An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's "Mimesis Criticism,"* *JBL* 124 (2005): 715-732.

⁴³E.g., see Deborah Boedeker, "Epic Heritage and Mythical Patterns in Herodotus," in *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 103; Detlev Fehling, *Herodotus and his "Sources": Citation, Invention, and Narrative Art* (trans. J. G. Howie; Leeds, Great Britain: Francis Cairns, 1990), 204; Thomas Harrison, *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford Classical Monograph; New York: Clarendon Press, 2000), 132, 136-137; and MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*, 37-43. For those who question this assertion, see Henry R. Immerwahr, "Historical Action in Herodotus," *TPAPA* 85 (1954): 34-36; and Stephanie West, "And it came to pass that Pharaoh dreamed: Notes on Herodotus 1.139, 141," *CQ* 37 (1987): 264-265.

(7.14, 17).⁴⁴ The Persians, however, fail in their campaign against the Greeks. The *Iliad* presents Zeus sending “a destructive dream” (οὐλος ὄνειρος)⁴⁵ to the Achaean king Agamemnon with the counsel to attack the city of Troy “with all haste” (πανσυδίη).⁴⁶ The dream “stood above his head, in the likeness of the son of Neleus, Nestor, whom above all the elders Agamemnon held in honor”⁴⁷ and persuaded Agamemnon that Troy was ready for the taking “now” (νῦν).⁴⁸ The result, however, is a prolonged military engagement with many Greeks dying.

Several factors suggest that Herodotus is imitating the *Iliad*. First, the function of these two dreams – to mislead – is unusual. As the following chapter will show, literary dreams are quite consistent in portending the future. Dreams predict events that may be fortune or misfortune, or dream can even be misinterpreted; but in almost every instance the dreams prove to be accurate and are fulfilled. A deceitful dream like that experienced by Xerxes is not the norm and most certainly recalls the highly familiar dream of Agamemnon.⁴⁹ Second, the deceitful dreams of both Xerxes and Agamemnon are presented as acts of divine retribution. The failed expedition of Xerxes, which the dream initiates, is

⁴⁴This series of dreams will be considered more fully in the next chapter.

⁴⁵Homer, *Il.* 2.8.

⁴⁶Homer, *Il.* 2.12; cf. 2.29.

⁴⁷Homer, *Il.* 2.20-21 (Murray, LCL).

⁴⁸Homer, *Il.* 2.29.

⁴⁹For a discussion of the ubiquity of Agamemnon’s dream in antiquity, see MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?*, 26-28.

a consequence of divine envy (φθόνος) against the hubris of the Persians (7.10).⁵⁰ In the *Iliad*, Zeus sends the deceitful dream in order to punish Agamemnon, who has dishonored Achilles (1.505). Third, in both Homer and Herodotus the dream figures command that the ill-fated campaigns begin immediately (πανσυδίη, *Il.* 2.29; ἀντίκα, *Hist.* 7.14). Fourth, it is also interesting to note that of the fourteen dreams that Herodotus narrates it is only in the dream of Xerxes that he describes the dream figure departing (“vanish away;” ἀποπέτομαι). Dream narratives in Homer almost always include the dream figure departing,⁵¹ and when Agamemnon relates the dream to the council of elders he uses the term ἀποπέτομαι (“vanish away”) to describe the dream figure’s departure (2.71).⁵² Thus, it seems that Herodotus has shaped the dream narrative of Xerxes according to the Homeric dream of Agamemnon.

Another example of possible literary imitation is the dream of Archelaus in Josephus (*War* 2.112-113//*Ant.* 17.345-348).⁵³ Some have suggested that Josephus has based his narration of Archelaus’s dream on the oneiric tales of

⁵⁰Nick Fisher, “Popular Morality in Herodotus,” in *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus* (ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 220-224.

⁵¹*Il.* 2.35; 23.100-101; 24.692-694; *Od.* 4.838-839; 6.41-47; 15.43; 20.55.

⁵²The term used in the dream report itself is ἀποβαίνω (“depart;” 2.35).

⁵³The subtle but interesting differences between the accounts of Archelaus’s in *War* and *Antiquities* will be explored more fully in the second part of this chapter.

Joseph in biblical book of Genesis.⁵⁴ Archelaus has a symbolic dream in which “he saw nine full, large ears of corn being devoured by oxen.”⁵⁵ He then summons “diviners (μόνταις) and certain ones of the Chaldeans” to interpret for him the meaning of the dream. When their interpretations conflict with one another, a certain Simon the Essene comes forward and provides an interpretation that will prove to be accurate: the number of ears of corn represents years and the devouring oxen signify change; the dream indicates the number of years of Archelaus’ rule. In Genesis 41, Pharaoh has two symbolic dreams. In the first dream, he sees “seven sleek and fat cows” eaten by seven “ugly and thin cows.”⁵⁶ In the second dream, Pharaoh sees “seven ears of grain, plump and good,” swallowed by “seven ears, thin and blighted.”⁵⁷ To determine the meaning of the dreams, Pharaoh summons “all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men,”⁵⁸ but no one was able to interpret the dream. As one who has the reputation of interpreting dreams, Joseph is then brought to Pharaoh to offer

⁵⁴See discussion and bibliographic references in Robert K. Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis* (AGJU 36; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 132-33 and 245-255. These discussions also include comparisons with Daniel, but Daniel also seems to be an imitation of the Joseph stories (Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus*, 246).

⁵⁵Josephus, *War* 2.112.

⁵⁶Gen 41:2-4 (NRSV).

⁵⁷Gen 41:5-7 (NRSV).

⁵⁸Gen 41:8 (NRSV).

an explanation of the dreams. Joseph discerns that both dreams signify the same future: seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine.

The parallels of Archelaus's dream with the Joseph tales are centered on a shared motif and similarities in content of the dreams. In both accounts, a ruler has a symbolic dream and calls upon his pagan, professional diviners to interpret the dream. When the professional diviners cannot interpret the dream, a Hebrew/Jewish person comes forward and properly reveals the meaning of the dream. This shared motif lends the most persuasive case for literary imitation. In addition to this motif, however, it should be noted that both dreams have agricultural images in which the number of ears of grain/corn is interpreted as years. Though not as evident as Herodotus's imitation of the *Iliad*, it can be argued that Josephus has at least been inspired by the biblical story of Joseph in his narrating the dream of Archelaus.

These instances of literary imitation illustrate one aspect of the invention of dreams. As stated above, the conventional and formal nature of dream reports makes the detection of literary mimesis quite precarious. But given the practice of literary imitation in antiquity⁵⁹ and the literary tradition of dreams, it should not be surprising if some dreams evoke a particular literary precursor. Herodotus and Josephus seem to be participating in this literary practice in

⁵⁹See the collection of essays in Dennis R. MacDonald (ed.), *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (Studies in antiquity and Christianity; Harrisburg, Pa. : Trinity Press International, 2001).

narrating their respective dreams and so demonstrate one facet of the invention of dreams.

*Homeric Quotes or Echoes*⁶⁰

The inventiveness of dreams may also be exemplified by the presence of Homeric quotes or echoes in a dream report. Plutarch narrates two dreams that include a quote or echo of Homer. In reporting the dream of Alexander that inspires the founding of Alexandria, Plutarch presents the dream figure as Homer⁶¹ who quotes from his *Odyssey*:

Then, in the night as he was sleeping, he saw a marvelous vision (ὄψιν εἶδε θαυμαστήν): A man with very gray hair and an honorable appearance seemed to be standing by him and speaking these words:

*“Now there is a certain island in the much-dashing sea,
in front of Egypt; And they call it Pharos.”*

Νῆσος ἔθειτά τις ἔστι πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ,
Αἰγύπτου προπάρειθε: Φάρον δέ ἐ κικλήσκουσιν.⁶²

The fashioning of the dream in relation to Homer is most certainly related to the legendary library at Alexandria. The other example is found in Plutarch's

Lucullus. On a military campaign, Lucullus has a dream:

⁶⁰Much have this material has been borrowed with permission from my article “Dreams, the Ancient Novels, and the Gospel of Matthew: An Intertextual Study,” *PRS* 29 (2002): 45.

⁶¹J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* (2d ed.; London: Bristol Classical Press, 1999), 67.

⁶²Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3 (modified trans. of Perrin, LCL), quoting *Od.* 4.354-355.

Having fallen asleep in the night it seemed that he saw the goddess [i.e., Aphrodite] standing over him and saying:
 “Why do you sleep, great-hearted lion?
 The fawns are near for you.”⁶³

The dream message is an allusion to the *Odyssey*, in which Menelaus likens Odysseus’s eventual revenge upon the suitors of Penelope to a lion that brings destruction to fawns:

Just as when in the thicket lair of a powerful lion a doe has laid to sleep her new born suckling fawns, and roams over the mountain slopes and grassy vales seeking pasture, and then the lion comes to his lair and upon her two fawns lets loose a cruel doom, so will Odysseus let loose a cruel doom upon these men.⁶⁴

Plutarch creatively uses the Homeric echo as the dream message, which results in Lucullus capturing his enemy.

One other example of a dream report including a Homeric quote is found in Plato’s *Crito*. Socrates relates to Crito a dream that, according to Socrates, portends his death:

It seemed to me that a certain beautiful and fair woman, who had a white garment came and called me and said, “O Socrates, on the third day you will come to fertile Phthia (ἤματί κεν τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἵκοιο).”⁶⁵

The dream message is a quote from a speech of Achilles, in which he speaks of going home: “On the third day I will come to fertile Phthia (ἤματί κε τριτάτῳ

⁶³Plutarch, *Luc.* 12.1.

⁶⁴Homer, *Od.* 4.335-339 (Murray, LCL).

⁶⁵Plato, *Cri.* 44a-44b.

Φθίην ἐπίβωλον ἰκοίμην).”⁶⁶ Plato imaginatively employs the Homeric quote to interpret the death of Socrates as a kind of going home.

The final examples of Homeric quotes and echoes in dream narratives come from the Greek novels. Though the Greek novels are fiction, and so leave no doubt as to the inventiveness of their dreams, the very fact that this practice of intertextuality also shows up in the novels may highlight the inventive character of the previous dreams of Plutarch and Plato. The dream narrative in Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 2.9.6 includes a quote from the Homeric dream of Achilles in the *Iliad*:

[A] vision of Chaereas stood over her, *like him in every way, in stature and fair eyes and voice, and wearing just such clothes* (πάντα αὐτῷ ὅμοια μέγεθος τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ’ εἰκυῖα, καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα <ἔστο>).⁶⁷

[T]hen there came to him the spirit of hapless Patroclus, *in all things like his very self, in stature and fair eyes and voice, wearing just such clothes* (πάντ’ αὐτῷ μέγεθος τε καὶ ὄμματα κάλ’ εἰκυῖα, καὶ φωνήν, καὶ τοῖα περὶ χροῖ εἴματα ἔστο); and he stood above Achilles.⁶⁸

The description of the dream figure Patroclus in the *Iliad* is borrowed for the description of the dream figure Chaereas in Chariton. Homeric echoes are also found in a couple of dream reports in the Greek novels. Longus’s *Daphnis and Chloe* 3.28.1 contains a Homeric echo from the *Odyssey* in describing the

⁶⁶Homer, *Il.* 9.363.

⁶⁷Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.9.6 (modified trans. of Reardon; text Blake).

⁶⁸Homer, *Il.* 23.66-67 (modified trans. of Murray, LCL).

dreamer's response/reaction.⁶⁹ After the dream figure(s) departs, "Daphnis jumped up cheerfully and, *with a lot of whistling, drove the goats to the pasture* (ῥοίζω πολλῶ ἤλαυνε τὰς αἰγας εἰς τὴν νομήν)."⁷⁰ This echoes the *Odyssey* where the Cyclops "with much whistling directed the fat goats to a mountain (πολλῆ δὲ ῥοίζω πρὸς ὄρος τρέπε πίονα μῆλα)."⁷¹ The description of the dream figure in the *Aethiopica* 5.22.1-2 is virtually a string of Homeric allusions and echoes that are various descriptions of Odysseus:⁷²

[B]ut as I slept, a vision of an old man appeared to me. Age had withered him (*Od.* 13.397ff) almost to a skeleton, except that his cloak was hitched up to reveal a thigh that retained some vestige of strength of his youth (*Od.* 18.67-68). He wore a leather helmet on his head (*Il.* 10.261), and his expression was one of cunning (*Od.* 13.332) and many wiles (*Od.* 1.1); he was lame in one leg, as if from a wound of some kind (*Od.* 19.392ff).

The fashioning of dream narratives with quotes and echoes of Homer further demonstrates the literary character of dreams. It also provides another case in point of how the dream narrative invites a degree of literary creativity.

⁶⁹This Homeric echo is identified by Christopher Gill in his translation of Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe* in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 315 n. 57.

⁷⁰Longus, *Daphn.* 3.28.1 (Gill; text Edmond, LCL).

⁷¹Homer *Od.* 9.315 (modified trans. of Murray, LCL).

⁷²See J.R. Morgan's note to his translation of Heliodorus in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 462 n.144.

The Double-Dream Report

The inventiveness of dreams can also be shown by the literary elaboration of the dream report known as the double-dream report.⁷³ The double-dream narrative involves two characters who each have a dream. The two dreams can be identical, similar, or entirely different, but they are connected in some way to “produce what may be called a ‘circumstance of mutuality’ between the two dreamers.”⁷⁴ Thus, the double-dream narrative provides a more sophisticated and engaging literary device for plot development.

The first example of a double-dream narrative comes from Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* 11.326-335. The high priest Jaddus has received news that Alexander the Great with his army is approaching Jerusalem. Jaddus had previously defied Alexander and so was in fear of the impending encounter. Having called upon the people to pray, Jaddus also prayed and offered sacrifices requesting God’s help. While in the temple he falls asleep and receives the following dream:

God commanded him during sleep to take courage and adorn the city with wreaths and to open the gates and go out to meet them, and that the people should be in white garments and he himself with priests should be in the robes prescribed by the laws, and that they should not look to suffer any harm, for God was watching over them.⁷⁵

⁷³Alfred Wikenhauser, “Doppelträume,” *Bib* 29 (1948): 100-111; and Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1414-1419.

⁷⁴Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1414-1419.

⁷⁵Josephus, *Ant.* 11.327 (Marcus, LCL).

Jaddus obeys the dream command and goes out with the people to meet Alexander and his army. The tension of the scene is heightened by Josephus's portrayal of the army, who "thought to themselves that the king in his anger would naturally permit them to plunder the city and put the high priest to a shameful death."⁷⁶ But when Alexander sees the people in their white clothing and Jaddus in his priestly garb, especially the priestly headdress with the name of God inscribed upon it, he prostrated before the divine name and greeted Jaddus. This highly unusual and unexpected act is explained by Alexander:

It was not before him that I prostrated myself but the God of whom he has the honor to be high priest, for it was he whom I saw in my sleep as he is now, when I was at Dium in Macedonia, and, as I was considering with myself how I might become the master of Asia, he urged me not to hesitate but to cross over confidently, for he himself would lead my army and give over to me the empire of the Persians. Since, therefore, I have beheld no one else in such robes, and on seeing him now I am reminded of the vision during my sleep and the exhortation, I believe that I have made this expedition under divine guidance and that I shall defeat Darius and destroy the power of the Persians and succeed in carrying out all the things which I have in mind.⁷⁷

Thus, the dream of Jaddus inspires actions that cause Alexander to recall his own dream, which moves Alexander to spare Jaddus and the Jewish people. The "circumstance of mutuality" exists in the people's salvation and in Alexander's opportunity to worship the God that exhorted him to begin his military conquest. Moreover, the double-dream narrative is the literary device by which Josephus writes the Jewish people and their God into the world history of

⁷⁶Josephus, *Ant.* 11.330 (Marcus, LCL).

⁷⁷Joshephus, *Ant.* 11.333-335. (modified trans. of Marcus, LCL).

Alexander and the Greeks.⁷⁸ Apart from the historical questions that are raised by this account,⁷⁹ the double-dream narrative itself betrays literary creativity.

The second illustration of the double-dream report is found in the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. In book 1.57, the legendary Aeneas has moved his troops into the territory ruled by Latinus, and he is taking materials from the land to establish a town. When Latinus hears of this, he leads his army near to where Aeneas is settling. As Latinus is encamped for the night and planning to attack Aeneas the following morning, both he and Aeneas have dreams that will prove beneficial:

Now when he had determined these things, a certain divinity (δαίμων) of that region appeared to him in his sleep and said to him the Greeks should be received into his land to dwell with his own subjects, adding that their coming was a great advantage to him and a benefit to all the Aborigines alike. And the same night Aeneas's household gods appeared to him and admonished him to persuade Latinus to grant them of his own accord a settlement in the part of the country they desired and to treat the Greek forces rather as allies than as enemies. Thus the dream (τὸ ὄναρ) hindered both of them from beginning an engagement. And as soon as it was day and the armies were drawn up in order of battle, heralds came to each of the commanders from the other with the same request, that they should meet for a conference; and so it came to pass.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 193-199.

⁷⁹Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 195, is quite forward in his evaluation of Josephus's account: "[It] is outright fabrication The tale is a fiction."

⁸⁰Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.57.3-4 (modified trans. of Cary, LCL).

The narrator explains the mutual benefit of the two dreams: a battle is averted and a peace accord is established. For the larger plot, however, the two dreams effect a relationship between Greeks and Latins and initiate the ultimate founding of the city of Rome. The literary device of the double-dream narrative functions well for enacting such momentous events.

Finally, the Acts of the Apostles provides two examples of a double dream-vision report. The accounts are not dreams, however, but visions. I include them here because Acts is a Christian text and it serves as a reminder – and preliminary perspective for the appendix – that dreams and visions represent the same phenomenon that occurs either while one is asleep (dream) or awake (vision).⁸¹

The first double dream-vision in Acts involves Ananias and Saul (Paul). The dream-vision report directly follows the account of Paul's encounter with Christ as he was traveling to Damascus and his subsequent blindness (9:1-9). The vision is narrated as follows:

Now there was a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision (ἐν ὁράματι), "Ananias." And he said, "I am here, Lord." And the Lord said to him, "Ananias, "Get up and go to the gate that is called Straight and seek in the house of Judas one named Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he is praying and he sees a man in a vision named Ananias coming and laying his hands upon him so that he might see again." And Ananias responded, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all the ones who call upon your name." And the Lord said to him, "Go, for this one is a chosen vessel for

⁸¹This position is conveyed in the terminology of Hanson: dream-vision report and double dream-vision report.

me to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him what is how much he must suffer for my name." And Ananias departed and entered the house and put his hands upon him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who you saw on the road while coming here, so that he may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something fell from his eyes like scales, and he could see again, and he got up and was baptized and receiving food he regained his strength.⁸²

This double dream-vision is notable for the way in which one vision is narrated within another dream-vision report; the report of Saul's vision is embedded in the vision message given to Ananias. The two visions work together so that the infamous persecutor of the church Saul is now received and served by a would-be victim with healing, baptism, and nurture. Ananias also benefits with the revelation that Saul is no longer a threat. But Luke also artistically utilizes the double dream-vision to include the Lord in this "circumstance of mutuality" and those who will now hear the name of Jesus because of Paul's mission.

In chapter 10, Luke provides another double dream-vision that involves a Gentile "God-fearer" named Cornelius and the apostle Peter. The first vision narrated is the one granted to Cornelius:

At about the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision (ἐν ὁράματι φανερώς) an angel of God coming to him and saying to him, "Cornelius." And he stared at him and being afraid he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and almsgivings have gone up as a memorial before God. And send now men to Joppa and summon a certain Simon who is called Peter. This one is being entertained by a certain Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." And when the angel who spoke to him departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who

⁸²Acts 9:10-19.

was a close companion to him, and having described everything to them he sent them to Joppa.⁸³

The scene then shifts to Joppa, where Peter is praying on a rooftop. And as he is praying, he falls into a trance and has the following vision:

He saw the heavens open and some object descending like a large piece of cloth being let down upon the earth by the four corners. And on it there were all kinds of animals and reptiles of the earth and birds of the sky. And there came a voice to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything defiled and unclean. And the voice again a second time came to him, "What God has cleansed, you do not consider defiled." And this happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up to heaven.⁸⁴

As Peter is pondering the meaning of the vision, Cornelius's messengers arrive at Simon's house and relate the request to return with them to Cornelius. Peter accepts the invitation, and the Gentile Cornelius describes his vision to him. Peter learns his own lesson, announcing that "God has shown me that I should not call anyone defiled or unclean."⁸⁵ Peter then preaches the gospel, after which the Holy Spirit comes upon all who heard Peter's preaching and are baptized.

The "circumstance of mutuality" effected by these visions is Cornelius's hearing of the gospel, experiencing the gift of the Holy Spirit, and receiving baptism; and Peter is prepared for his encounter with the Gentile Cornelius, gaining a new understanding about the character of God and the implications of the gospel. And like the double dream-vision in chapter 9, this "circumstance of

⁸³Acts 10:3-8.

⁸⁴Acts 10:11-16.

⁸⁵Acts 10:28.

mutuality” is more inclusive than simply Cornelius and Peter. The Cornelius event becomes the critical impetus for the church recognizing the place of the Gentiles among God’s people.⁸⁶ In fact, the double dream-visions of Acts 9 and 10 themselves function in tandem to motivate the events that will ultimately determine the decision of Gentile inclusion in Acts 15. The literary artistry of Luke is on full display in his utilization of the double dream-visions in Acts 9 and 10.

The double-dream narrative proves particularly helpful in illustrating the inventiveness of dreams. As a sophisticated literary device that facilitates plot development at critical points, the double-dream report attracts embellishment and invention.⁸⁷

Dreams and “Rewritten Bible”

The inventiveness of dreams can also be demonstrated by noting their presence in the Jewish literary tradition referred to as “Rewritten Bible.” “Rewritten Bible” refers to a literary development in Middle Judaism that reworks and retells biblical stories through a diverse combination of verbatim

⁸⁶Acts 15:1-28, esp. 7-11 and 13-18.

⁸⁷For other texts that contain double dream-vision reports, see Livy, *Hist. Rome* 8.6.9-11; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.43-84; Athenaeus, *Delph.* 13.575; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 4.1.4-8, Longus, *Daphn.* 1.7.1-3;; Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 8.11.1-9; Petronius, *Sat.* 104; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.6; *Acts Thom.* 29-34; *Acts John* 18-19. References given by Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1415 n. 82; I have added the Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus references.

reproduction, paraphrase, expansion, addition, and omission.⁸⁸ Though adapted to a variety of genres and motivated by a diversity of social and intellectual concerns,⁸⁹ a primary characteristic of “Rewritten Bible” is literary creativity.⁹⁰ Dreams constitute one way in which this embellishment and refashioning of the Jewish scriptures is achieved. The three “Rewritten Bible” texts that are treated here are the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen), Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*, and Ezekiel the Tragedian’s *Exagoge*.

The *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen) was among those first manuscripts discovered in Cave 1 of Qumran, and already in 1966 it was the subject a full length commentary by Joseph Fitzmyer, which was revised in 1971. The text is written in Aramaic and was composed sometime during the first century B.C.E. and first century C.E.⁹¹ Fitzmyer’s description of the *Genesis Apocryphon* is worth

⁸⁸Brant Pitre, “Rewritten Bible,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, by David E. Aune (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 410-414 (esp. 412).

⁸⁹George W. E. Nickelsburg, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. Michael E. Stone; vol. 2 of *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud*; CRINT Section Two; The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1984), 89-90; Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, chs. 4-5; and Craig A. Evans, “The Genesis Apocryphon and the Rewritten Bible,” *RevQ* 13 (1988): 154-162.

⁹⁰See Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, ch. 4.

⁹¹For introductory matters, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary* (2d rev. ed.; BibOr 18a; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 1-41; and Bruce N. Fisk, “Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen),” *DNTB* 398-401.

repeating, for it reinforces the notion that a fundamental characteristic of these kinds of texts (i.e., “Rewritten Bible”) is literary creativity:

We stress then the independent character of this composition. Though it depends on the biblical text of Genesis and displays at time traits of targumic and midrashic composition, it is in reality a free reworking of the Genesis stories, a re-telling of the tales of the patriarchs. . . . The Genesis Apocryphon represents then an example of late Jewish narrative writing, strongly inspired by the canonical stories of the patriarchs, but abundantly enhanced with imaginative details.⁹²

These imaginative details include three dreams that have been added to embellish the biblical text.

The first dream in the *Genesis Apocryphon*⁹³ comes as an embellishment to the narrative of Genesis 12:10–13:1, which tells the story of Abraham and Sarah’s sojourn into Egypt because of a famine. In the biblical story, it is before they enter Egypt that Abraham recognizes Sarah’s beauty as a potential threat to his life and so instructs her to say that she is his sister; otherwise the Egyptians will kill him if they know that she is his wife. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, a dream narrative has been added to beginning of the narrative unit. After Abraham enters Egypt, he has a dream, which is narrated by Abraham as follows:

I, Abram, had a dream, on the night of my entering into the land of Egypt and I saw in my dream [that there wa]s a cedar, and date-palm (which was) [very beautif]ul; and some men came intending to cut down and uproot the cedar, but leave the date-palm by itself. Now the date-palm remonstrated and said, “Do not cut down the cedar, for we are both from the family.” So

⁹²Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon*, 10-11.

⁹³Since the manuscript is significantly corrupt at places, especially at the beginning, it would perhaps be more precise to say the first dream in the *extant Genesis Apocryphon*.

he cedar was spared with the help of the date-palm., and [it was] not [cut down].⁹⁴

When Abraham awakes from the dream, he not only tells Sarah the dream, but he also interprets the dream. Abraham explains that men will seek to kill him but spare Sarah. Presumably based on the intervention of the date-palm in the dream, Abraham asks Sarah to say that Abraham is her brother.

This function of this dream narrative is interesting in a couple of ways. First, by its placement at the beginning of the narrative unit, the dream foreshadows the plot and sets in motion the action of the plot. According to the interpretation given by Abraham, the dream portends the threat to Abraham and the saving intervention of Sarah. Moreover, the dream and its interpretation provides the impetus for Sarah's less than truthful statement that Abraham is her brother, a statement that actually leads to a further development of the plot; that is, Pharaoh's taking of Sarah. Though this part of the plot is not signified by the dream, perhaps it increases the interest and anticipation of the reader as the reader continues in hope of its resolution.

Second, the dream and its interpretation elicit an emotional response from Abraham and Sarah that introduces an element of inevitability into the narrative. The text reads that Abraham was "frightened by this dream" and that "Sarai

⁹⁴1QapGen XIX, 14-17 (Fitzmyer).

wept at my words that night.”⁹⁵ The dream portends that Abraham will be saved by the intervention of Sarah; and so the dream could be understood as God’s instruction or guidance to save Abraham, a reading that seems evident in Abraham’s interpretation of the dream and the consequent plan based on the dream. This sense of guidance and divine intervention via a dream is the norm in Jewish literature. But Abraham and Sarah’s emotional response suggests that their attention is not on the deliverance but on the inevitable threat and peril that lies ahead of them. This anticipation and concern for the unavoidable circumstances is characteristic of dreams in the Greek novels, which represents one of several novelistic features introduced into the scriptural story.⁹⁶

The second dream in the *Genesis Apocryphon* is also found in this narrative unit, though it is not narrated. In response to Abraham’s prayer that Sarah be protected, God sends unspecified ailments upon Pharaoh and his household. Pharaoh’s representative Hirqanos finds Abraham and begs his service in

⁹⁵1QapGen XIX, 18 and 21 (Fitzmyer); see also XX, 10-11 and 16 for other atypical emotional responses of Abraham.

⁹⁶Other novelistic features introduced to the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah in the *Genesis Apocryphon* include an ekphrasis of Sarah, the emphasis on the threat to Sarah’s chastity, and the accentuation of divine intervention. I analyzed these novelistic features in a paper, “The Romance of Abraham and Sarah: Novelistic Features in the *Apocryphon of Genesis*” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Antonio, Tex., November, 2004).

healing Pharaoh, “for [he had seen me] in a dream.”⁹⁷ The dream should be understood as another intervention by God that ironically puts Pharaoh, who has unknowingly wronged Abraham by taking his wife, in position of seeking Abraham’s favor. Abraham will not only have Sarah returned to him, but Pharaoh will reward him with gifts (XXI, 31).

The third dream comes as an addition to the retelling of Genesis 13:14-18, in which God tells Abraham to survey the promised land and restates the promise of progeny. In the *Genesis Apocryphon*, God’s communication to Abraham takes place in a dream: “God appeared to me in a vision of the night and said to me”⁹⁸ The dream message only includes the command to survey the promised land, which Abraham promptly does the next day. After Abraham’s survey of the land, God then reaffirms to him the promise of numerous descendants. In light of the biblical story, the dream report not only clarifies the means by which God speaks to Abraham, but it also emphasizes Abraham’s faithful response to the divine instruction, which is lacking in the Genesis text. Thus the dream narrative, with its formal feature of a response, provides a literary device that facilitates Abraham’s response to God’s command and so enhances the biblical story.

⁹⁷1QapGen XX, 22 (Fitzmyer). It is unclear in the text whether the dream was Pharaoh’s or Hirqanos’s.

⁹⁸1QapGen XXI, 8 (Fitzmyer).

Another example of “Bible Rewritten” is Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (*Biblical Antiquities*), which retells the biblical story from Adam to the death of Saul.⁹⁹ This retelling, interestingly, both abridges and expands the scriptures, omitting large sections of the original narrative while at the same time adding material. Dreams are affected by both of these literary techniques. For example, in retelling the Joseph saga Pseudo-Philo includes the statement that Pharaoh had a dream (8:10), but unlike the biblical narrative the dream is not narrated nor is Joseph’s detailed interpretation given. The dream narrative is simply reduced to a reference. Our concerns, however, are the five dreams that have been added to the original scriptural narrative.

The first additional dream is found in the story of Moses’ birth. The scripture story is embellished by reporting a dream of Moses’ sister Miriam. The dream is narrated as a report by Miriam to her parents:

I have seen this night, and behold a man in a linen garment stood and said to me, “Go and say to your parents, ‘Behold, he who will be born from you will be cast forth into the water; likewise through him the water will be dried up. And I will work signs through him and save my people, and he will exercise leadership always.’” And when Miriam told of her dream, her parents did not believe her.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Though originally written in Hebrew in the first or second century C.E., the text was translated into Greek and then into Latin; it survives only in Latin manuscripts. For introductory issues, see D. J. Harrington, “Pseudo-Philo,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:297-303; Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (2 vols.; AGJU 31; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1:195-280.

¹⁰⁰L.A.B. 9.10 (Harrington, *OTP*).

As the above discussion on dreams and encomium indicates, dreams are a common motif of birth narratives in Greco-Roman literature revealing the future destiny of a notable person. The birth story of Moses invites this kind of literary-rhetorical embellishment, and Miriam's dream fulfils this convention. Miriam's dream proleptically represents Moses' divine mission and leadership as well as alluding to two critical events in his life, his being placed in an ark in the Nile and the parting of the Red Sea. The dream also provides the context for expressing two major themes of *Biblical Antiquities*: God's "saving" activity and the issue of leadership.¹⁰¹

Pseudo-Philo also mentions certain dreams experienced by Pharaoh's daughter (9.15), though they are not narrated. In the biblical story, Pharaoh's daughter comes to the Nile to bathe and by happenstance finds baby Moses in the ark (Exod 2:5). In *Biblical Antiquities* her decision to come to the Nile to bathe is motivated by the dreams that she has seen; her presence at the Nile is in response to the divinatory function of dreams. Thus, this literary addition highlights the providential aspect of Moses' preservation.

Although it is not an extra-scriptural dream, the dream of Balaam in Numbers 22 is significantly expanded in *Biblical Antiquities*. The scriptural narrative relates how God spoke to Balaam commanding him not "to curse the people, for they are blessed" (22:12; NRSV). This communication is implicitly

¹⁰¹Frederick J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 59.

related as a dream, for the encounter is introduced with Balaam's direction to Balak's messengers, "Stay here tonight" (22:8; NRSV), and concludes with the comment, "So Balaam rose in the morning" (22:13; NRSV). In *Biblical Antiquities*, the dream phenomenon is made more explicit by introducing Balaam as an interpreter of dreams (18.2) and stating that God spoke to Balaam at night (18.4). More significant is Pseudo-Philo's expansion of the dream message (18.5-6). The dream not only warns Balaam not to curse Israel, but it also provides an opportunity to rehearse the blessing and covenant relationship between God and Israel. In the dream God recalls the promise of progeny for Abraham, the gracious response to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, the special counsel to Abraham regarding the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the blessing conferred to Jacob while wrestling with the angel. This expansion illustrates how God has blessed and chosen Israel, but these memorable episodes from the biblical story have not been narrated in *Biblical Antiquities*. Pseudo-Philo presents a highly condensed version of the ancestral narratives in chapter 8, but none of these specific instances of divine blessing are related or mentioned. Thus, the dream becomes a literary device by which gaps in the previous narrative are filled as well as a warrant for the command. As a command-warning dream, the dream of Balaam corresponds to dreams in Greco-Roman literature; but the emphasis on and review of past events is an unusual development of the dream report.

This kind of development is also seen in Pseudo-Philo's representation of Joshua's covenant renewal speech. The biblical text introduces Joshua's speech with reference to the gathering of all the tribes of Israel (24:1) and to Joshua's speaking to them, "Thus says the LORD" (24:2; NRSV). Pseudo-Philo, however, presents Joshua's speech as inspired and revealed in a dream:

And on the sixteenth day of the third month all the people along with women and children gathered together before the Lord in Shiloh, and Joshua said to them, "Hear, O Israel. Behold I am establishing with you a covenant of this Law that the LORD established for you fathers on Horeb. And so wait here this night and see what God will say to me on your behalf." And while the people were waiting that night, the LORD appeared to Joshua in a dream vision and said to him, "According to these words I will speak to this people." And Joshua rose up in the morning and gathered all the people and said to them, "The LORD says this: . . ." ¹⁰²

The speech that Joshua then gives is the message that God revealed to Joshua in the dream as indicated in the conclusion, "These are the words that the Lord spoke to me this night."¹⁰³ Like the dream of Balaam, the message of Joshua's dream greatly elaborates the original, biblical speech with a rehearsal of God's past dealings with Israel (23.4-11), but it also announces God's continued, future faithfulness if Israel keeps the divine covenant (23.12-13). There is very little of the biblical speech present in Pseudo-Philo's recasting of it,¹⁰⁴ thus providing

¹⁰²L.A.B. 23.2-4a (Harrington, *OTP*).

¹⁰³L.A.B. 23.13c (Harrington, *OTP*).

¹⁰⁴L.A.B. 23.4b, 5b, 8a, 9, 11, 14a (Harrington, *OTP*).

Pseudo-Philo a context for expressing his particular theological interests.¹⁰⁵ By depicting the origin of the speech in a dream, the speech – and so Pseudo-Philo’s ideas – achieves a greater authority and explains the means by which God communicated to Joshua.

The inventiveness of dreams is also evidenced in the way Pseudo-Philo describes the final testament of the priest Eleazar as being first received in a dream.¹⁰⁶ This testamentary dream is part of the larger Kenaz narrative (25 – 28), which is an embellishment of the biblical text that only mentions Kenaz in Judges 3:9, 11 as the father of Othniel. The setting is the last days of Kenaz before his death and the assembly of the people, including Phinehas, the son of the priest Eleazar (28.1). Phinehas asks permission to relate “the word that I heard from my father when he was dying . . . while his soul was being taken away.”¹⁰⁷ After Kenaz agrees to hear first from Phinehas, Phinehas recounts Eleazar’s message:

While my father was dying, he commanded me, saying, “These words you will say to the sons of Israel, ‘When you gathered together in the assembly, the LORD appeared to me three days ago in a dream by night and said to me, . . .’”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵For a discussion of how the speech reflects the concerns of Pseudo-Philo, see Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo*, 108-113.

¹⁰⁶Flannery-Dailey has shown how the “testamentary dream” is a uniquely Jewish development of the dream report (Frances Lynn Flannery-Dailey, “Standing at the Heads of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity” [Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2000], ch. 5). Cf. *T. Levi* 2:5 – 5:7; 8:1-18; *T. Naph.* 5:1 – 6:10 (cp. 7:1); *T. Jos.* 19:1-11; *4 Ezra* 11:1 – 12:51; 13:1 – 14:26; *2 Bar.* 36:1 – 43:2; *2 En.* 1:3-10; 70:3-13; and *4QVisions of Amram^{a-f}* (4Q543-548).

¹⁰⁷*L.A.B.* 28.3a (Harrington, *OTP*).

¹⁰⁸*L.A.B.* 28.4a (Harrington, *OTP*).

The dream message, as God's word, then foretells the corruption and unfaithfulness of Israel and the subsequent anger and sorrow of God. The response of Kenaz and the people is one of lamentation, and sometime later in the evening Kenaz enters a trance and begins to prophecy. Just as Eleazar's final testament is inspired in a dream-vision, the final testament of Kenaz is inspired through a prophetic trance. The divinatory nature of dreams and prophecies contribute to the authority of these final testaments.

The final illustration of dreams in "Rewritten Bible" comes from the *Exagoge* by Ezekiel the Tragedian. The *Exagoge* is a departure from our consideration of prose narratives, but its inclusion here is intended to demonstrate the diverse forms for which the literary activity of "Rewritten Bible" could be adopted. It also provides an opportunity to exhibit a memorable invented dream. This dramatic tragedy, written in Greek, survives only in quotations from Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, and Pseudo-Eustathius. The provenance and date of the work are difficult to settle, though Alexandria in the second century B.C.E. is often suggested.¹⁰⁹

The *Exagoge* retells the story of Moses in dramatic form. One of the more interesting embellishments of the biblical story is the dream of Moses and its interpretation by Moses' father-in-law. In terms of the plot, the dream report

¹⁰⁹For introductory issues, see R. G. Robertson, "Ezekiel the Tragedian," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 2:803-807; Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 128 n. 68.

takes place just prior to Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush. Moses relates the dream to his father-in-law as follows:

On Sinai's peak I saw what seemed to be a throne
 so great in size it touched the clouds of heaven.
 Upon it sat a man of noble mien,
 Becrowned, and with a scepter in one hand
 while with the other he did beckon me.
 I made approach and stood before the throne.
 He handed o'er the scepter and he bade
 me mount the throne, and gave to me the crown;
 then he himself withdrew from off the throne.
 I gazed upon the whole earth round about;
 things under it, and high above the skies.
 Then at my feet a multitude of stars
 fell down, and I their number reckoned up.
 They passed by me like armed ranks of men.
 Then I in terror wakened from the dream.¹¹⁰

It has been argued that Moses' dream portends his future deification, since the dream describes Moses ascending a throne that God has occupied.¹¹¹ But the interpretation set forth by Moses' father-in-law states that the dream signifies Moses' future leadership and authority and that he will be responsible for a future dynasty, though not of his own.¹¹² Dreams that prefigure an individual's

¹¹⁰Ezek. Trag. 68-82 (Robertson, *OTP*). Robertson's translation is an attempt to render the text in iambic pentameter. I have not modified it for this reason, but it should be noted that the dream is introduced with the conventional δοκέω: ἔ<δο>ξ' ὄρους κατ' ἄκρα Σιν<αί>ου θρόνον μέγαν τιν' εἶναι ("It seemed on the peak of Mt. Sinai that there a great throne"). Also, the last line (89) reads "from sleep" (ἐξ ὕπνου) not "from the dream."

¹¹¹P. W. van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," *JJS* 34 (1983): 24-27. Most interpreters believe the "man of noble mien" of Moses' dream signifies God; see Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 123.

¹¹²Ezek. Trag. 85-86 (Robertson, *OTP*).

future glory and reign are common in Greco-Roman literature. Ezekiel the Tragedian participates in this literary tradition by supplementing the biblical story with a dream narrative.

Summary

Several ancient sources refer to inventing dreams. This section has attempted to identify this practice in specific instances of Greco-Roman literature. By looking at literary imitation of dreams, Homeric quotes and allusions in dreams, the double-dream report, and dreams in "Rewritten Bible," it seems that dreams are a literary *locus* for creativity, embellishment, and literary license. As stated above, the inventive character of dreams does not negate the reporting of actual dreams or traditions about dreams. It does, however, highlight that in the narration of dreams ancient authors shaped, fashioned, and utilized dreams according to their own literary concerns.

Conclusion

This chapter represents the first part of an analysis of the literary character of dreams in Greco-Roman literature, particularly prose narratives. In this chapter, this literary facet of dreams was described and demonstrated in three ways. First, dreams in Greco-Roman literature are narrated or reported according to a compositional pattern. The dream narrative is an identifiable literary type with repetitive formal features. This formal pattern contributes to the character of dreams as a literary convention in ancient literature. Second,

dreams are occasionally discussed in the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition in connection with encomium and style. The very context of literary-rhetorical considerations betrays that dreams are being approached and understood in literary-rhetorical terms. And thirdly, the references to the invention of dreams by ancient rhetoricians suggest that there is an artistic, creative quality to dream narratives. Dreams attract a variety of inventive adaptations, depending on the author's literary purposes and interests. Thus, a proper understanding of dreams in the ancient Mediterranean world must take into account and fully appreciate their literary character and dimensions.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Ancient, Literary Context of Dreams, Part II: The Literary Functions of Dreams

The present chapter continues the literary analysis of dreams in Greco-Roman literature by analyzing the function of specific dream narratives. The dream narratives will come from a sampling of Greco-Roman histories, biographies, and fiction. It should be carefully noted that the presence or function of dreams is *not* an indicator of genre. It is perhaps no exaggeration to suggest that dreams are found in every form of Greco-Roman literature: epics, dramas, histories, biographies, philosophical treatises, medical treatises, novels, letters, dialogues, allegories, inscriptions, etc. The focus here, however, is on prose narratives, and these three genres are the most apt representatives of prose narrative in Greco-Roman literature. Thus, genre is an organizational device for this chapter, not an argument for the function of dreams.

Because this analysis of dream narratives will be facilitated by attending to the form of dreams, it is helpful to review the literary form of the dream narrative.¹ The four formal features of the dream narrative are (1) *scene-setting*, (2) *dream terminology*, (3) *dream proper*, and (4) *reaction and/or response*. The *scene-setting* can include (a) the identification of the dreamer, along with a sketch of his

¹John S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," *ANRW* 23.2: 1395-1427.

or her character, (b) the place where the dream occurs, (c) the time in which the dream occurs, (d) the mental state of the dreamer, and (e) the activity of sleeping. The *dream terminology* usually comes after the *scene-setting*, but its placement can vary. The *dream proper* includes three types: (a) visitant dream, (b) auditory dream, and (c) symbolic dream. The *dream proper* is often introduced by δοκέω. The dream narrative concludes with the dreamer's *reaction* (waking, amazement, perplexity, fear, interpretation, etc.) and/or *response*, taking some course of action based on the *dream proper*. The following outline is given again as a reference guide to the form of the dream report:

1. *Scene-setting*
 - a. identification of dreamer, along with a sketch of his or her character
 - b. place
 - c. time
 - d. mental state of dreamer
 - e. sleep
2. *Dream Terminology*
3. *Dream proper* (three types) - often introduced by δοκέω
 - a. Visitant dream - dream figure visits to deliver message
 - i. identification of dream figure
 - ii. description of dream figure
 - iii. position of dream figure
 - iv. message
 - v. departure of dream figure
 - b. Auditory dream - dream message only heard
 - c. Symbolic dream - scene or event described; interpretation required
4. *Reaction and/or Response* of dreamer

With this compositional pattern of dreams in mind, we now turn to analyzing dream reports in selected Greco-Roman texts.

Dreams in Greco-Roman Histories

This section will analyze dreams in two texts that are representative of Greco-Roman histories: Herodotus's *Histories* and Josephus's *Jewish War*.

Dreams in some other histories are as follows: Appian (*Bell. civ.* 1.11.97; 1.12.105; 2.16.115; 4.14.110; *Hist. Rom.* 8.1.1; 8.20.136; 11.9.56; 12.2.9; 12.4.27); Diodorus Siculus (*Biblio.* 13.97.6; 16.33.1; 17.103.7); Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.65; 2.14; 11.4; 12.13; *Hist.* 4.83); Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. rom.* 1.56.5; 1.57.4 [2]; 3.67.3; 5.54.2; 7.68.3-5 [3]; 20.12.1-2); Livy 8.5; and 2 Maccabees 15:11-17.²

*Herodotus's Histories*³

Dating from the fifth century B.C.E., Herodotus's *Histories* represents the Greek classical period and so is outside the time frame for this survey of dreams in Hellenistic literature. The influence of this text on the literary activity of the Hellenistic period, however, makes its inclusion justified;⁴ in addition the dreams

²It is interesting to note that Thucydides has no dream narratives. Polybius mentions three dreams (5.108; 10.4-5; 10.11), but he is suspicious of dreams (12.24) and these dreams are not typical literary dreams. The dream in 5.108 is simply a reference to a dream and is highly "psychological"; the dream in 10.4-5 is actually a contrived dream (cf. Suetonius, *Claud.* 37.1-2 and Philo, *Mos.* 1.268 for other contrived dreams); and the dream in 10:11 is embedded in a speech and may also be understood as a contrived dream by Polybius.

³Translations of Herodotus are mine or modified translations of Godley, LCL. For introductory issues, see Herodotus: Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong; and Hans van Wees, eds., *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); John P. A. Gould, "Herodotus," *OCD* 696-698; Klaus Meister, "Herodotos," *DNP* 5:470-475.

⁴Meister, "Herodotos," 5:474.

in Herodotus provide a helpful variety of the literary function of dreams. The *Histories* provides an account of the “barbarian” aggressions against the Greeks and so is structured around the sequence of these barbarian kings, beginning with Croesus and ending with Xerxes. This simple description of the *Histories*, however, obscures its encyclopedic-like treatment of various subjects, such as geography and local histories and customs, and its attempt to describe and understand a variety of human, cultural experiences.

It is often pointed out that all the dreams in Herodotus are experienced by eastern rulers,⁵ though this tendency has not been satisfactorily explained.⁶ There are seventeen dream narratives or references to dreams in Herodotus, and each one will be analyzed in the following survey.

The dream of Croesus (Hist. 1.34). The dream of the Lydian king Croesus comes after an extended narrative concerning the wise Athenian Solon, who is the guest of Croesus (1.30-33). Croesus shows Solon his vast treasures with the certainty that Solon would declare him the most blessed man in the world. But the wise Solon measures blessedness by how one ends his life, not one’s present

⁵For example, see Peter Frisch, *Die Träume bei Herodot* (Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie 27; Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain, 1968), 52.

⁶For example, Keely Kristen Lake, “Vergil’s Dreams and Their Literary Predecessors” (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 2001), 101, states that “the eastern rulers are transgressors and their dreams are part of the divine warning system against attacking the Greeks.” This statement, however, does not account for all the dreams in Herodotus. Moreover, it is a deceptive dream that actually prompts Xerxes to commence his military campaign against the Greeks (7.12-14, 17-18, 19).

fortune. Croesus dismisses Solon, regarding him as quite foolish. At this point, the dream report is given.

But after Solon's departure, the anger of God (ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις) fell heavily on Croesus, as I guess, because he supposed himself to be blest beyond all other men. At once, as he slept, a dream stood by [him] (εὐδοντι ἐπέστη ὄνειρος), which revealed (ἔφαινε) the truth of the evil that was about to happen to his son. Croesus had two sons, one of whom was wholly undone, for he was deaf and dumb, but the other, whose name was Atys, was in every way far pre-eminent over all of his years. Now it was this Atys that the dream signified (σημαίνει . . . ὁ ὄνειρος) to Croesus that he would be struck and killed by a spear of iron. So, Croesus awoke, thought to himself about the message, and greatly dreaded the dream (καταρρωδήσας τὸν ὄνειρον).

The *scene-setting* establishes the time of the dream (after Solon's departure) and the identity of the dreamer (Croesus), and it mentions the activity of sleep. The character of Croesus is also important in setting the scene for this dream. Croesus (falsely) thinks that he is the most blessed, which demonstrates his foolishness and arrogance. Most dream narratives, when they describe the character of the dreamer, mention the dreamer's virtue, but Croesus's dream functions within the larger plot of divine retribution. The type of dream (*dream proper*) is somewhat ambiguous. The language of "standing by" (ἐπίστημι) suggests that it is a visitant dream, but the term φαίνω has a more visual connotation, perhaps indicating a symbolic dream. If it is a symbolic dream, its interpretative nature is secondary, for Herodotus as narrator explicitly states what the dream signifies: the death of Croesus's son Atys by an iron spear. It is interesting to note that the *dream proper* is interrupted by a narrative aside that

informs the reader about Croesus's two sons. The *reaction* to the dream is described in terms of waking from the dream, considering the dream, and fearing the dream. Croesus's *response* to the dream receives the most attention. Herodotus tells how Croesus takes one precaution after another to prevent the fate of Atys that was portended by the dream (1.34-42). And yet, it is one of these preventive actions that actually leads to the death of Atys by an iron spear (1.45). The irony of this set of circumstances is not lost on the reader, who, given the predicative quality of dreams, anticipates its fulfillment despite Croesus's attempts to prevent it; the dream is determinative. The dream functions in two ways. First, the dream predicts death, which is a common motif associated with dreams. Second, it contributes to the plot development of the divine punishment of the ill-character Croesus.⁷

The dreams of Astyages (Hist. 1.107-108). In the account of Cyrus, the king of Persia, Herodotus reports two dreams concerning the birth of Cyrus that portend his future sovereignty and greatness. Both dreams are symbolic and experienced by Cyrus's grandfather Astyages before Cyrus's birth. The first dream report begins with the simple clause "Astyages thought in [his] sleep . . ." (ἐδόκεε Ἀστυάγης ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ), thus identifying the dreamer (Astyages), indicating the activity of sleep, and introducing the dream proper with the customary δοκέω. The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream of Astyages's daughter

⁷Frisch, *Die Träume bei Herodot*, 21-22, argues that the dream is not about Croesus's arrogance but the inescapability of fate. This interpretation, however, sets up an unnecessary dichotomy between character and fate.

Mandane “urinating so much that it filled his own city and overflowed all of Asia.” The *reaction* of Astyages is twofold. First, he submits the dream to the magi for interpretation. Herodotus does not relate to his readers the interpretation provided by the magi, but he does describe Astyages’s second reaction: “he was afraid” (ἐφοβήθη) and “he feared the vision” (διδουκῶς τὴν ὄψιν). His *response*, then, is to marry his daughter Mandane to a Persian named Cambyses, because Astyages, the Median king, perceives the Persian Cambyses to be of a lesser distinction and, therefore, a lesser threat. The reader is left to infer the meaning of the dream.

The second dream is reported immediately after the first one. The *scene-setting* and *dream terminology* are given in one sentence: “in the first year [of Mandane’s marriage] Astyages saw another vision” (ὁ Ἄστυάγης τῷ πρώτῳ ἔτει εἶδε ἄλλην ὄψιν). Like the first dream of Astyages, the *dream proper* is a symbolic dream and is introduced by δοκέω: “It seemed that from the pudendum of his daughter came forth a vine, and the vine covered all of Asia.” Once again, Astyages *reacts* by consulting the dream interpreters. Herodotus, again, does not give the interpretation but narrates the *response* of Astyages, who brings Mandane, who is now pregnant, back from Persia and keeps her under guard, because he “wants to destroy the child that comes from her.” At this point, Herodotus finally reveals the meaning of the dream given by the dream interpreters: “the offspring of his daughter would rule instead of [Astyages].”

This delay in giving the meaning of the symbolic dreams has the rhetorical effect of confirming or correcting the meaning tentatively determined by the reader.

Astyages's plot to have the baby killed is foiled by a series of events, and eventually Cyrus does establish an empire over that of Astyages. The portents of the dreams prove to be determinative and are fulfilled.

The dream of Cyrus (Hist. 1.209). Herodotus's story of Cyrus ends with an account of Cyrus's death, which is predicted in a dream but misinterpreted by Cyrus. The *scene-setting* mentions both the place (beyond the Araxes River in the country of the Massagetae) and the time (night). The *dream terminology* is "he saw the following vision (εἶδε ὄψιν . . . τοιήνδε). The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream with the conventional δοκέω: "Cyrus in his sleep seemed to see the eldest of Hystaspes's sons having wings upon his shoulders, and one of these wings was overshadowing Asia and the other one Europe." It should be noted that the *dream proper* includes a narrative aside that informs the reader about Hystaspes's eldest son, Darius, and his circumstances at the time of the dream. The *reaction of* Cyrus is described as "awaking" and "thinking to himself about the vision." His interpretation of the dream is that Hystaspes's son Darius is planning a coup against his reign. Herodotus rhetorically emphasizes Cyrus's certainty of the interpretation by having Cyrus recount verbatim the dream to Hystaspes and stating, "The gods are concerned about me, even showing me beforehand everything that is coming." Cyrus's certainty, however, is undermined when Herodotus relates to the reader the real meaning of the dream: "But the daimon

(ὁ δαίμων) predicted for him that he himself was about to die in this place and that his kingdom would be transferred to Darius" (1.210) Herodotus then relates how Cyrus was killed in a battle with the Massagetae (1.211-214). In Greco-Roman literature, dreams often predict or are associated with the death of an individual.

The dream of Sabacos (Hist. 2.139). Sabacos was an Ethiopian king who invaded Egypt and ruled there for fifty years. Herodotus relates how the end of his reign was prompted by a dream.

The final departure of the Ethiopian, they say, happened in this way. Having seen the following vision in [his] sleep he departed and fled (ὄψιν ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ τοιήνδε ἰδόντα αὐτὸν οἴχεσθαι φεύγοντα). It seemed (ἔδόκεε) that a man who stood over him counseled him to bring together all the priests in Egypt and to sever them in two. Having seen this vision, he said that he supposed it to be a manifestation sent to him by the gods, that he might commit sacrilege and so be punished by gods or men; he would not (he said) act so, but otherwise, for the time foretold for his rule over Egypt, after which he was to depart, was not fulfilled: for when he was still in Ethiopia the oracles (τὰ μαντήια) which are inquired of by the people of that country declared to him that he was fated to reign fifty years over Egypt. Seeing that this time was now completed and that the vision of the dream troubled him (αὐτὸν ἡ ὄψις τοῦ ἐνυπνίου ἐπετάρασσε), Sabacos departed Egypt of his own accord.

Herodotus's presentation of this dream has several interesting qualities. First, Sabacos's *response* and the consequence of the dream (departing Egypt and ending his reign) are mentioned at the beginning of the dream report. This alteration has the effect of "re-locating" the reader's anticipation of the narrative. Usually the reader's anticipation is connected with how the dreamer's response or the subsequent events of the plot will fulfill the dream. In this case, however,

the outcome is known beforehand, and so the anticipation is the dream itself: what kind of dream would prompt Sabacos to end his reign of Egypt? This dream is also interesting because of the seemingly incongruence between the *dream proper* and Sabacos's response. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream that advises Sabacos to execute all the Egyptian priests. In the conventional dream report, the message of the dream is heeded by the dreamer; if it is not obeyed, negative consequences usually follow. Sabacos, though, does not act in accordance to the message but decides to leave Egypt rather than commit sacrilege and face the subsequent, inevitable punishment. The incongruence, however, is resolved when Herodotus notes in the end that before Sabacos came to Egypt prophetic oracles had revealed that his reign would be fifty years. Thus, the dream is really about prompting the action that fulfills the oracles. The connection between prophecy and dreams is not uncommon in Greco-Roman literature and will be important in the study of dreams in the Gospel of Matthew.

The dream of Sethos (Hist. 2.141). The dream of the Egyptian king Sethos functions to provide assurance of victory in battle. The *scene-setting* is elaborated by explaining the predicament. The Egyptian soldiers desert Sethos because he has confiscated their land. When the Assyrian general Sanacharib threatens Egypt, Sethos enters the temple and prays to the god. The *scene-setting* proper describes the mental state of the dreamer Sethos and refers to sleep: "As he was lamenting sleep fell upon [him] (ὄλοφυρόμενον δ' ἄρα μιν ἐπελθεῖν ὕπνον)." The *dream proper* is a visitant dream that is introduced by δοκέω: "And it

seemed in a vision that the god stood over [him] and assured him (καί οἱ δόξαί ἐν τῇ ὄψι ἐπιστάντα τὸν θεὸν θαρσύνειν) that he would suffer no disgrace by encountering the army of Arabia, for the [god] himself will send avengers.”⁸ The *reaction/response* of Sethos is described as “trusting in this dream” (πίσυνον τοῖσι ἐνυπνίοισι) and encamping near the Assyrian army with those few Egyptians who would follow him. Herodotus then describes how in one night a horde of mice damaged the weapons of the Assyrian army, making an Egyptian victory certain. The association of dreams and battles is common in Greco-Roman literature.

The dream of Cambyses (Hist. 3.30). Herodotus narrates a series of acts that illustrate the impiety and madness of Cambyses, the Persian king. Cambyses’s “first evil act” is prompted by a dream. The *scene-setting* is important because it describes the character of the dreamer Cambyses as mad (μαίνομαι), and this madness finds expression in jealousy (φθόνος) of his brother Smerdis, whom Cambyses had sent to Persia from Egypt. The *dream proper* (ὄψιν . . . ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ) is a visitant dream introduced by δοκέω: “It seemed (ἔδοξέ) that a messenger came from Persia and reported that Smerdis was placed on the royal throne with his head reaching to heaven.” Cambyses’s *reaction* is twofold and interrelated: He (1) “fears for himself” (δείσας περὶ ἑωυτοῦ), because he (2)

⁸Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.141 (modified trans. of Godley, LCL).

interprets the dream to mean that Smerdis will assassinate him and become king. Cambyses *responds* by having Smerdis killed.

The dream of Cambyses is unusual in that Smerdis does not become king as the dream seems to indicate. The reader expects that the dream is determinative and will be fulfilled. This anomaly, however, may be explained by recognizing that the dream is part of the larger context of revealing the negative character of Cambyses. Thus, though the motif of the dream is a king's rule, the narrative function of the dream is related to revealing the character of Cambyses.

The dream of Polycrates's daughter (Hist. 3.124). As a kind of digression from the story of Cambyses, Herodotus narrates the murder of Polycrates, the esteemed tyrant of Samos, at the hands of Oroetes (3.120-126). This "unholy act" (3.120) is presaged by a dream. The *scene-setting* has Polycrates preparing to visit Oroetes despite the warnings of the diviners and friends. The unstated prophecies of the diviners are coupled with the dream of Polycrates's daughter, "who saw the following dream vision (ἰδούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς ὄψιν ἐνυπνίου τοιήνδε): It seemed (ἔδόκεε) that [her] father, being in mid-air, was washed by Zeus and anointed by the sun." The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream introduced by δοκέω. The daughter *responds* by trying to persuade her father not to visit Oroetes, but he does not listen to her counsel. Polycrates indeed meets his death, being murdered by Oroetes, though Herodotus does not narrate the manner of Polycrates's death. Oroetes has the body of Polycrates crucified, which according to Herodotus fulfills the dream: "Now with Polycrates hanging there,

the daughter's entire vision was accomplished; for he was washed by Zeus when it would rain, and he was anointed by the sun when it brought out the moisture from his body" (3.125).

This dream report is interesting in several respects. First, the manner in which Herodotus narrates the story of Polycrates creates both a certainty and anticipation. From the very beginning, the reader knows that Oroetes will murder Polycrates (3.120). Given this knowledge, the reader anticipates the death of Polycrates and reads the dream as an assured affirmation of this event. But the reporting of a symbolic dream without an immediate interpretation leaves the reader anticipating how the death of Polycrates will correspond to the dream vision. The reader is certain of Polycrates's death but uncertain as to the manner of his death as predicted by the dream. Herodotus makes sure this uncertainty is answered by explicitly stating how the dream forecasted Polycrates's demise. The dream also is noteworthy for its connection with prophetic oracles. Though less creative and explicit in its presentation, this dream report does link dreams and prophecies, which is not uncommon in Greco-Roman literature.

The dream of Otanes (Hist. 3.149). The dream of the Persian general Otanes is not narrated but simply mentioned. As part of his military campaign, Otanes had deported the entire population of the island Samos. But because of a dream vision (ὄψις ὀνείρου), along with a disease of the genitals, Otanes is moved to help re-colonize the island. The implication is that the dream and the disease

convince Otanes that the gods are not pleased that the island was uninhabited. The dream functions as a medium of a divine command.

The dream of Hipparchus (5.56). As part of a long digression on the history of Athens (5.55-96), Herodotus recounts the death of Hipparchus, the tyrant of Athens, which is predicted in a dream. The dream report is actually retrospective in that Herodotus already states that Hipparchus was murdered, “having seen a dream vision (ὄψιν ἐνυπνίου) which most clearly related (ἐναργεστάτην) that which befell him” (5.55). It is after this statement that Herodotus narrates the dream:

Now the vision of Hipparchus’s dream was this (ἦ μιν νυκτὸς ὄψις τοῦ Ἰππάρχου ἐνυπνίου ἦν ἣδε): in the night before the Panathenaea Hipparchus thought (ἐδόκεε) that a tall and handsome man stood over [him] and spoke these riddling words:

Endure, Lion, the unendurable, suffering with an enduring heart;
No man who acts unjustly shall avoid vengeance.

As soon as it was day, he imparted this vision to the dream interpreters; but after dismissing the dream he led the ceremonial procession in which he was killed.

The dream of Hipparchus is conventional in that it portends his death, but the way in which Herodotus reports this dream is interesting for its rhetorical effect.

As stated, the fulfillment and meaning of the dream is reported before its narration, and Herodotus as narrator judges the dream to be the clearest indication (ἐναργής) of Hipparchus’s fate. And yet, Hipparchus still requires the help of interpreters to ascertain the meaning of the visitant’s enigmatic message. Without Herodotus’s retrospective telling of the dream and authorial comment,

the reader may well have shared in Hipparchus's confusion, especially given that the message was a riddle. Herodotus's literary strategy, however, provides the reader with a privileged position, so that Herodotus and the reader stand over against the imprudent Hipparchus, an evaluation underscored by the *response* of Hipparchus to ignore the message at his own peril. Though more sophisticated in its reporting, the dream functions as a prediction of Hipparchus's death.

The dream of Hippias (Hist. 6.107). Hippias was the exiled Athenian tyrant, who served as a guide for the Persian attack on Greece. While in service to the Persians, Herodotus reports that Hippias had a dream:

In the previous night [Hippias] saw the following vision (ὄψιν ἰδὼν τοιήνδε): Hippias seemed (ἔδόκεε) to be lying with his own mother. He thus concluded from the dream (ἐκ τοῦ ὀνείρου) that he should return to Athens and recover his rule and so die an old man in his own mother-country.

The *scene-setting* assumes much of the context, mentioning only the time (previous night) and introducing the dream terminology (ὄψις). The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream introduced by δοκέω. The *reaction* of Hippias is simply his interpretation that the dream signifies his eventual return to power in Athens. Hippias's inference about the dream, however, changes when he sneezes and loses a tooth in the sands of Marathon. This omen causes Hippias to lament, "This land is not ours, nor will we be able to subdue it; my tooth has all the share of it that was for me." Hippias, then, changes his understanding of the dream: the dream and the lost tooth signify defeat (6.108), which is subsequently narrated (6.111-113).

The dream of Datis (Hist. 6.118). During his campaign, the Persian general Datis “saw a vision in [his] sleep” (εἶδε ὄψιν ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ). Herodotus says that the exact nature of the vision was not known, but Datis’s *response* to it is underscored. Datis searches his ships and finds a cultic image of Apollo, which had been taken as a spoil of war. Datis personally sails the statue back to its proper place in the temple at Delos. The assumption is that dream revealed to Datis the sacrilege and commanded its return.

The dream of Agariste (Hist. 6.131). In a transitioning section, Herodotus briefly mentions the symbolic dream of Agariste concerning her unborn child: “And being pregnant, she saw a vision in [her] sleep (καὶ ἔγκουζ ἐούσα εἶδε ὄψιν ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ). It seemed (ἐδόκεε) that she bore a lion, and after a few days she bore Pericles to [her husband] Xanthippus.” The report is truncated, lacking the *scene-setting* and *reaction/response* features. The *dream proper* is symbolic, but an interpretation is lacking. The birth of Pericles is not pertinent to Herodotus’s narrative; he seems to assume that readers know about the dream and how Pericles’s future corresponds to the dream. Lions are often the symbol of royalty and conquerors.⁹ It is a birth dream signifying the future rule of Pericles, and as was noted in the previous chapter this dream concerning Pericles was an example in the progymnasmata of demonstrating the birth *topos* of an encomium.

⁹Cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.3, and the comments by J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* (2d ed.; London: Bristol Classical Press, 1999), 3-4.

The dreams of Xerxes and Artabanus (Hist. 7.12-14, 17-18, 19). The dreams of Xerxes and Artabanus stand at the critical juncture of Herodotus's *Histories*,¹⁰ even initiating the action that is principal to Herodotus's narrative. The Persian king Xerxes was intent on leading a military campaign against the Greeks until his uncle Artabanus in a long speech makes a case against such an expedition (7.10). The *scene-setting* of the dream stresses the mental state of Xerxes and refers to the activity of sleeping: "After evening it happened that Artabanus's opinion provoked Xerxes; and giving serious counsel [to this] during the night he concluded that no army would march against Greece. And having resolved these things anew he fell asleep." Herodotus then introduces the dream with language and a comment that seems to deflect any thought that his presentation is biased: "And then, supposedly, in the night he saw the following vision, (as it is said by the Persians) (καὶ δὴ κου ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ εἶδε ὄψιν τοιήνδε, ὡς λέγεται ὑπο Περσέων)." The *dream proper* is a visitant dream, whose message is given in direct discourse:

It seemed (ἐδόκεε) to Xerxes that a tall and handsome man stood over [him] and said, "Have you now decided, O Persian, not to lead an army against Greece, though you have already declared to assemble the Persian army? You do not do well by changing your decision, nor will the one [you see before you] pardon you for it. But do what you decided yesterday, and let that be your course."

¹⁰See Fisher, "Popular Morality in Herodotus," 220, who states that "Xerxes' decision to invade mainland Greece is the most elaborately deployed, important, and over-determined decision in the *Histories*." See also, Harrison, *Divinity and History*, 132.

The *dream proper* concludes with the vision “seeming to fly away.” Xerxes does not follow the counsel of the dream, however, and informs his army on the following day that they will not march against Greece (7.13). This non-response to the dream occasions another nocturnal visit.

And when night came the same dream (τὸν αὐτὸ ὄνειρον) again stood over Xerxes while he was sleeping and said, “O son of Darius, have you so openly denounced the military campaign among the Persians and made no consideration of my words as though you heard no one beside [you]. Now do this right. If you do not march the army at once, this will be your outcome: just as you became great and mighty in a short time, you will be brought back low just as quickly.”

Xerxes’s *reaction/response* to the dream is described as being greatly afraid (περιδεής), leaping out of bed, and sending for Artabanus.

Xerxes comes up with a plan to have Artabanus wear the royal attire, sit on the throne, and sleep in Xerxes’s bed in order to deceive the dream in thinking that Artabanus is Xerxes. In doing this, Xerxes hopes to confirm the truthfulness of the dream (7.15). After much protest, Artabanus agrees and follows through with Xerxes’s proposal, “hoping to prove wrong what Xerxes said” (7:17).

Herodotus narrates,

The same dream (τὸν αὐτὸ ὄνειρον) that visited Xerxes came to Artabanus while he was sleeping and stood over him and said, “Are you that person who is dissuading Xerxes to march the army against Greece, as though you are concerned for him? But neither hereafter nor in the present will you escape punishment for trying to change what must take place. It has been made known to Xerxes himself what he must suffer if he disobeys.” After these things, it seemed to Artabanus that the dream threatened [him] by attempting to burn his eyes with hot irons.

Artabanus *reacts* with a loud cry and jumping up out of bed and *responds* by recounting the dream to Xerxes and urging him to lead the army against the Greeks.

The fourth and final dream of this series comes to Xerxes after he has begun making preparations for the military campaign. Herodotus's narration of this dream is unusual in that he states the interpretation of the dream as part of the *scene-setting*: “[A] third vision happened in [his] sleep (τρίτη ὄψις ἐν τῷ ὕπνῳ ἐγένετο), which the magi when hearing it interpreted to refer to the whole earth and to enslaving all people.” The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream and is introduced with *dream terminology* and the conventional δοκέω:

Now the vision was this (ἡ δὲ ὄψις ἦν ἡδε): It seemed (ἐδόκεε) to Xerxes that he was crowned with an olive bough, and from the olive bough branches spread upon the whole earth, but then the crown that was placed upon his head disappeared.

The dream report is also unusual in that the *response* is not by the dreamer Xerxes but the army who hears the magi's interpretation and is enthused by its prospect.

The function of this series of dreams has been discussed in the previous chapter. Herodotus seems to have modeled his dreams after the deceiving dream of Agamemnon in Homer's *Iliad*. In obedience to the command of the dream figure Xerxes decides to invade Greece, an action that will eventually end in failure. Dreams related to battles and wars are common in Greco-Roman literature, but the functions are usually to encourage the dreamer and to predict

accurately victory or defeat. The dreams of Xerxes and Artabanus, however, deceptively prompt actions that will bring disaster.

Summary. Herodotus narrates eight symbolic dreams (1.31[?]; 1.107-108 [2]; 1.209; 3.124; 6.107; 6.131; 7.19) and six visitant dreams (2.139; 2.141; 3.30; 5.56; 7.12-14, 17); two dreams are not narrated (3.149; 6.118). In reporting these dreams, Herodotus is highly consistent in using the term ὄψις; the two exceptions being ὄνειρος in 1.34 and 7.17. Also, Herodotus always introduces the *dream proper* with δοκέω. The dreams in Herodotus have a range of functions. Dreams portend the future greatness of an individual at his birth (1.107-108; 6.131), indicate one's future reign or loss of rule (2.139; 3.30), provide divine command-warnings (3.149; 6.118), predict victory or defeat in battle (2.141; 7.12-14, 17, 19 [deceptive]), and presage death (1.34; 1.209; 3.124; 6.107). Moreover, the dreams contribute to the characterization of individuals as well as prompt the narrative's plot movement. Herodotus also provides some examples of dream reports with narrative asides (1.34; 1.209) and of dreams linked with prophetic oracles (3.124; 2.139).

*Josephus's Jewish War*¹¹

Josephus wrote his *Jewish War* at the end of Vespasian's reign (ca. 79), though book 7 was written near the end of the first century. On the surface, *Jewish War* is an account of the Jewish rebellion against Rome, which ended in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. But as characteristic of ancient historical monographs, it is a multifaceted, literary work that attempts to provide lessons about political, social, cultural, and theological issues. For example, Steven Mason identifies four principal themes operating in *Jewish Wars*: (1) the noble service of the Judean ruling class; (2) the insidious problem of civil/political strife (*stasis*); (3) the Romans as the agents of the Jewish God to punish the Judean Jews; and (4) Jews as an honorable people with an honorable history.¹²

The reports of dreams in *Jewish Wars* are most likely drawn from the sources used by Josephus, except—of course—for those dreams that he alleges he experienced himself. The use of sources, however, does not preclude Josephus's shaping or altering these dream reports for his own purposes. And because much of the material in *Jewish War* is also found in his later *Antiquities*, it is interesting to compare the dreams in *Jewish War* with their reporting in *Antiquities*.

¹¹Translations of Josephus are mine or modified translation of Thackeray, LCL. For introductory issues, see Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (2d ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003); and Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus," *ABD* 3:981-998.

¹²Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 68-99.

The dreams of Herod the Great (J.W. 1.328 [=Ant. 14.451]). In recounting the military exploits of Herod the Great, Josephus refers to certain “dreams” that Herod experiences concerning the death of his brother Joseph. The dreams themselves are not narrated, but in *Jewish War* the reporting of them contains some formal features of the dream-vision narrative. The *scene-setting* feature identifies Herod as the dreamer and specifies “Daphne, near Antioch” as the place where the dreams occur. The *dream terminology* is the plural ὄνειροι, which precludes Josephus from providing the narration of multiple *dreams proper*. Instead of the dream proper, Josephus simply states that the dreams “clearly presaged (σαφεῖς . . . προσημαίνουσιν) the death of his brother.” The dreamer’s *reaction/response* is described as Herod “leaping out of bed disturbed” at the exact moment when the messengers enter with the news of his brother’s death.

The motif of the dreams is common, portending the death of someone. The reporting of the dreams, however, is unusual in that Josephus narrates the death of Joseph (1.323-327) before mentioning Herod’s dreams. The customary pattern is to report a predictive dream and then narrate its fulfillment. The effect is one of anticipation and suspense as the reader continues with the narrative, curious as to how exactly the prediction will be come to pass. This literary effect is foiled by Josephus’ narrative arrangement of describing Joseph’s death before the predictive dreams. And yet, this arrangement allows for the narrative nicety of Herod awaking from one of these disturbing dreams just as the messengers of

the misfortune arrive (ἄγγελοι τῆς συμφορᾶς). Thus, the emphasis shifts from the event of Joseph's death to the character of Herod, who quickly sets out to avenge his brother's death.¹³

Josephus repeats this reference to Herod's dreams in *Jewish Antiquities* 14.451. Although the basic account is the same, there are some differences in the reporting of the dreams, which consequently alters the narrative effect. First, the paragraph begins with those who report the news of Joseph's death; their arrival does not coincide with Herod's reaction to one of the dreams as in *Jewish War*. As a matter of fact, the formal feature of Herod's reaction to the dreams in *Jewish War* is missing in the *Antiquities* account. Also, there is no *scene-setting* in the *Antiquities* account. The reference to "Daphne of Antioch" is connected to where the messengers inform Herod of his brother's death; it is not related to the reference of Herod's dreams. Thus, the formal features of the dream report present in the *Jewish War* account are omitted in *Antiquities*. In *Antiquities*, it simply states that Herod expected such news "because of certain visions of dreams that distinctly indicated (διὰ τινος ὀνείρων ὄψει τρανῶς προφανούσας) the death of his brother." In *Antiquities*, the reference to Herod's dreams seems incidental to the narrative.

The dream of Archelaus (J.W. 2.112-113 [=Ant. 17.345-348]). Josephus ends the Archelaus material in *Jewish War* (2.1-116), and in *Antiquities* (17.200-355), by

¹³See B.J. 1.336-339, 342, which explicitly links his victory in battle with the motive of avenging his brother's death.

reporting a dream of Archelaus. Josephus first relates the circumstances under which Augustus revoked Archelaus's rule and exiled him to Gaul (2.111), specifically noting that this banishment happened in the ninth year of his reign. He then narrates the dream, but only offhandedly linking it to the narrative by the simple expression φασιν ("it is said"). The *scene-setting* assumes much of the narrative but does indicate the general time at which the dream occurs: "before [Archelaus] was summoned by Caesar." The *dream terminology* is ὄναρ with the frequently used δοκέω introducing the *dream proper*: "It seemed (ἔδοξεν) that he saw nine full, large ears of corn being devoured by oxen." Archelaus's *response* to the dream is to seek help in interpreting the symbolic dream: "he sent for diviners (μόνταις) and certain ones of the Chaldeans and inquired what they thought it signified." These professionals differ in their interpretations, which Josephus does not describe, but Josephus does recount the interpretation of a certain Essene named Simon:

A certain Simon, of the sect of the Essenes, said that in his view the ears of corn denoted a period of time and the oxen a change of circumstances because the plowing [by the oxen] changes the field; he would therefore rule for as many years as there were ears of corn and would die after various changes of circumstances.

Josephus ends the section by noting that Archelaus was summoned to Rome for his trial just five days after hearing Simon's interpretation.

The dream is a symbolic, predictive dream that signifies the fate of Archelaus's rule, which is a common motif of dreams. Once again, Josephus

deviates from the conventional pattern of narrating first the dream and then describing the manner in which it is fulfilled. In terms of narrative discourse, the dream report does not foreshadow an event; it is a flashback that fills out the narrative in a retrospective fashion.

It is interesting to note that in *Antiquities* (17.345-348) the dream of Archelaus is more integrated into the narrative than in *Jewish War*. The dream is still reported after the fact and is mostly identical in terms of content, but its relation to the context is more explicit. Josephus describes the messenger of Augustus, who summons Archelaus to Rome to give an account of his brutal reign, as relating the news while Archelaus is feasting with his friends (17.344). Josephus then states that “before being summoned to come up to Rome, Archelaus described to his friends the following dream (ὄναρ τοιόνδε) that he saw.” The implication is that Archelaus recounts the dream to his friends at the banquet just prior to the arrival of the messenger. Whereas in *Jewish War* the dream is introduced with the minimal φασιν (“it is said”), in *Antiquities* the feast is the context of both the reporting of the dream and the fulfillment of the dream.

The dream of Glaphyra (*War* 2.114-116 [=*Ant.* 17.349-353]. Immediately after narrating the dream of Archelaus, Josephus “believes it is fitting to mention the dream (τό ὄναρ) of his wife Glaphyra.” In addition to indicating the place and time of the dream (not long after her arrival in Judea; 2.116), the *scene-setting* includes a review of Glaphyra’s marriage history (2.114-115) so that the content of the dream will make sense. Glaphyra was first married to Archelaus’s brother

Alexander, who eventually was killed by his father Herod the Great. She then marries the Lybian king Juba. After Juba's death, Archelaus divorces his wife Mariamme in order to marry the now widowed Glaphyra. With the *dream terminology* (τό ὄναρ) given at the beginning of this section (2.114), the *dream proper* simply begins with δοκέω:

It seemed (ἔδοξεν) that Alexander stood beside (ἐπιστάντα) her and said, "The Libyan marriage was sufficient for you, but not content with that you returned to my house to take a third husband, and O audacious woman, this one my brother. However, I will not overlook this outrage (τὴν ὕβριν), but I will reclaim you though you may not wish it." After describing the dream, she lived barely two days.

Though in a vague manner, this visitant dream announces to Glaphyra the consequence of her transgression: death. The dream report is somewhat abridged in that it lacks any description of the dreamer's *reaction/response*. Instead, the fulfillment of the dream is promptly and modestly stated, making explicit the meaning of the ambiguous dream message.

The dream of Glaphyra in *Antiquities* is similar in terms of the larger context and setting, but the *dream proper* has been expanded, creating a more dramatic representation and a fuller understanding of why Josephus relates the dream:

And being married to Archelaus she saw the following dream (τοιόνδε ὄναρ): It seemed (ἔδόκει) that Alexander was standing by her, and when she saw him she rejoiced and enthusiastically embraced him. But he considered her at fault and said, "Glaphyra, you prove the saying that declares, 'A woman is not to be trusted.' For though you were betrothed and married to me as a virgin and we had children, you forgot [these things] and betrayed my love by desiring a second marriage. Nor was this

the extent of your outrage (ὄβρεως), but you had the audacity to have a third bridegroom lie down with you; and you came into my house indecently and imprudently by agreeing to marry Archelaus, your own brother-in-law and my brother. However, I myself will not forget your [first] goodwill, and I will remove every reproach by making you as my own, as you were [before].” She described these things to her female friends, and after a few days her life came to an end.

In this version of Glaphyra’s dream, the emotions and intensity of the transgression are much more pronounced. The appearance of Alexander brings joy to Glaphyra and arouses her to embrace him, but Alexander suppresses her *reaction* by reproaching her and offering a highly descriptive account of her treachery. This description leaves the reader with a greater impression of her offense.

Moreover, in *Antiquities* Josephus provides a rationale for including the dreams of Archelaus and Glaphyra (17.354): they concern royal persons, and they provide examples of the immortality of the soul and God’s providence in human affairs. And then, as if anticipating an objection, he states, “Such things can be disbelieved by anyone, but while having his own opinion he should not hinder the one who adds them for the purpose of virtue (ἐπ’ ἀρετὴν).” This explanation may provide a clue to explaining the differences between the dreams in *Jewish War* and *Antiquities*. In *Jewish War* the dreams of Archelaus and Glaphyra seem incidental to the narrative; but in *Antiquities* both dreams are more integrated into the narrative, and Glaphyra’s dream is elaborated. The research of Steve Mason is most helpful here. According to Mason, *Jewish War* is less concerned with the reigns of Herod’s sons, “focusing rather on the

turbulence that arose in Judea” which led to the war with Rome.¹⁴ Thus, the postscript-like reports of the dreams of Archelaus and Glaphyra in *Jewish War* reflect the perspective of that work. *Antiquities*, on the other hand, has a different purpose than *Jewish War*: to illustrate “that, according to the ancient and noble constitution of the Jews, those who stray from the law come to a disastrous end.”¹⁵ For Josephus, Herod’s family provides ample illustrations of this thesis, and the dreams of Archelaus and Glaphyra in *Antiquities* contribute to the dramatic demonstration of that argument.

The dreams of Josephus (War 3.351-354). Josephus himself was involved in the first Jewish war against Rome as a military leader in Galilee. Hunted and besieged by the Romans, Josephus surrendered to Nicanor, the representative of the Roman general Vespasian. In his *Jewish War*, Josephus describes in third person how he came to the decision to surrender.

But as Nicanor was persistently urging his proposals and Josephus became aware of the threats of the hostile crowd, he remembered [his] dreams during the night (τῶν διὰ νυκτὸς ὀνείρων), in which God prefigured (προεσήμανεν) to him the misfortunes (τάς συμφοράς) that were about to come upon the Jews and the future of the Roman rulers. Now concerning the interpretation of dreams (περὶ κρίσεις ὀνείρων) he was skilled in discerning the ambiguous statements of the Deity (τὰ ἀμφιβόλως ὑπὸ τοῦ θείου λεγόμενα); and he was certainly not ignorant of the prophecies of the sacred books as he himself was a priest and a descendant of priests. And then at that hour, becoming inspired (ἔνθους γενόμενος) and comprehending the dreadful images (τὰ φρικώδη . . . φαντάσματα) of [his] recent dreams, he offered this silent prayer to God, “Because it seems good to you, the Creator, that the Jewish people fade away, and all fortune

¹⁴Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 154.

¹⁵Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 155.

pass to the Romans, and you have chosen my soul to speak about the things that are about to take place, I willingly give myself to the Romans and stay alive, and I am giving witness not as a traitor but I am your servant.

Josephus does not narrate the dreams, but the references to interpretation and dream images (φάντασμα) suggest symbolic dreams. The immediate *response* of Josephus is to surrender to the Romans, but the function of the dreams is more significant than simply to direct Josephus to surrender. In linking these dreams and their interpretation with inspiration and the prophecies of Scripture, Josephus seems to infer that the dreams signify the fulfillment of the biblical prophecies. This inference is supported by the common convention in Greco-Roman literature in which dreams and oracles contribute to the fulfillment of one or the other. Thus, the dreams and their relation to prophecies contribute to a major theme of the *Jewish War*: like ancient Assyria and Babylon, the Romans are instruments of God's judgment upon the Jewish people.¹⁶

Steve Mason also observes that the dreams of Josephus occur at the midpoint of *Jewish Wars*, a pattern that seems to be present in Josephus's other works.¹⁷ As such, the dreams occur at a critical moment of the narrative and Josephus's life, revealing the Roman victory as God's will and prompting Josephus to surrender.

¹⁶Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 81-88.

¹⁷Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, vol. 9 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (ed. Steve Mason; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 104 n. 927. The prophetic dreams of Daniel (Book 10) stand at the center of his twenty volume *Antiquities*; a decisive dream is narrated about midpoint in *Josephus's Life* (208-209).

Summary. There are four reports of dreams in Josephus's *Jewish War*, two non-narrated (1.328; 3.351-354) and two narrated (2.112-113; 2.114-116). The two non-narrated dream references use the plural term ὄνειροι to indicate the dream phenomenon, while the two narrated dream reports use the term ὄναρ with δοκέω introducing the *dream proper*. Two dreams signify the impending death of someone (1.328; 2.114-116), and one dream portends the loss of one's rule (2.112-113); and yet, each of these three dreams also functions to demonstrate the character of the dreamer. Though the fourth dream (2.351-354) has a familiar function in connection with a battle or war, its more central function is its contribution to a critical narrative moment. This dream also is associated with the fulfillment of prophecies.

Dreams in Greco-Roman Biographies

The following survey of dreams in Greco-Roman biographies will consider the Acts of the Apostles,¹⁸ Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, and Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars*. Other ancient biographies that contain dream reports or references

¹⁸The genre of Acts is greatly debated and still lacks a scholarly consensus. It is interesting that a case has been made for each of the genres considered in this chapter: history (Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-definition : Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic historiography* [NovTSup 64; Leiden: Brill, 1992];); biography (Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* [Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1974]; Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004], 237-39, 275-279), and novel (Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of Acts of the Apostles* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987]).

to dreams are Diogenes Laertius (1.117; 2.35; 3.2; 3.5)¹⁹, Philostratus (*Vit. Apoll.* 1.5; 1.9; 1.10; 1.23; 1.29; 4.11; 4.34; 8.7.v; 8.12)²⁰, Lucian (*Peregr.* 26.2), Soranus (*Vit. Hipp.* 4.7), and *Life of Aesop* (6-9; 29 [cf. 30; 33]).²¹

*Acts of the Apostles*²²

Written near the end of the first century C.E., the Acts of the Apostles is included in the New Testament canon and is the second volume of the Third Gospel, the Gospel of Luke. It narrates the ministry and life of the early church—with emphasis on the apostles Peter and Paul—as it fulfills the command of Jesus to preach the gospel to the whole world (1:8). This narrative contains four dreams reports.

Before examining the dreams individually, it should be noted that the dreams collectively have a function within the narrative of Acts. In chapter 2, the speech of Peter interprets the Pentecost event, in which the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers, as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. The prophecy is quoted and partially reads, “. . . and your young men will see visions (ὀράσεις

¹⁹In addition to dream reports, Diogenes Laertius also includes certain philosophers’ teachings about dreams: 6.43; 8.32; 10:32; 10:135.

²⁰In addition to these dream reports or references, see 2.37 for teaching regarding dreams.

²¹There are no dream narratives in Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*; Philo, *Life of Moses* (1.268 and 1.289 are contrived dreams); Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus*; or Satyrus, *Life of Euripides*.

²²Translations of Acts are mine.

ὄψονται) and your old men will dream dreams (ἐνυπνίοις ἐνυπνιασθησονται; 3.17). The subsequent narrative includes both visions (9:3-9 [cf. 22:6-11; 26:12-18]; 9:10-17; 10:3-8 [cp. 10:30-33]; 10:9-16 [cf. 11:4-11]; 22:17-23) and dreams (16:6-10; 18:9-11; 23:11; 27:23-26). The Joel prophecy not only interprets retrospectively the Pentecost event, but it also interprets proleptically the ensuing ministry of the church. Thus, visions and dreams have a programmatic function in Acts: they are signs of the continued, spirit-empowered apostolic ministry that was initiated at Pentecost. Also, this association of dreams and prophecy would be familiar to an ancient audience.

The dream of Paul (16:6-10). This dream comes about as Paul and his companions Silas and Timothy are seeking to proclaim the gospel on the so-called “second missionary” journey. Their efforts, however, are hindered by the Holy Spirit; they were prevented (κωλύω) to preach in Asia (vs. 6) and were not permitted (ἐάω) to go into Bithynia (vs. 7). So, they enter to city of Troas, where Paul has the following dream:

And during the night a vision appeared to Paul (καὶ ὄραμα διὰ τῆς νυκτὸς τῷ Παύλῳ ὤφθη). There stood a certain man of Macedonia begging him and saying, “Cross over to Macedonia and help us.” And when he had seen the vision, we immediately attempted to go over to Macedonia concluding (συμβιβάζοντες) that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The *scene-setting* includes the circumstances of being divinely hindered in their missionary journey, and it identifies the place (Troas) and time (night) of the dream and the dreamer (Paul). The *dream terminology* is ὄραμα. The *dream*

proper is a visitant dream of a certain Macedonian man who requests Paul's help. The *response* is an immediate attempt to comply with the dream message. This response, however, does not come without some discernment of what the vision intends. The missionaries infer (συμβιβάζω) that the night vision means God is calling them to evangelize Macedonia. Thus, the message of the dream is not straightforward and is most likely understood in connection with their experience of divine hindrance in Asia and Bithynia. The function of the dream is a divine directive that advances the gospel across the Aegean Sea and thus contributes to the fulfillment of Jesus' command at the beginning of Acts: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (1.8).

The dream of Paul (18:9-11). Acts 18:1-17 describes Paul's ministry in Corinth, where his experience with the Jews has been both positive and negative. On the one hand, Paul has experienced opposition and insult from the synagogue (vss. 4-6). But on the other hand, he has been united with the Jewish-Christian couple Aquila and Priscilla (vss. 2-3) and has converted the official of the synagogue Crispus (vs. 8). Moreover, Paul has established a house-church right beside the synagogue (vs. 7), which no doubt intensified the conflict between Paul's ministry and the ministry of the synagogue. It is in this context that Paul receives a dream:

In the night through a vision the Lord said to Paul (εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος ἐν νυκτὶ δι' ὄραματος τῷ Παύλῳ), "Do not fear, but speak and do not be silent; because I am with you and no one will put [a hand] on you to harm

you, [and] because there are many of my people in this city.” And he resided there a year and six months teaching among them the word of God.

This dream narrative is introduced with one clause that identifies the time of the dream (night), the *dream terminology* (ὄραμα), the dreamer (Paul), and the dream figure. The dream functions to encourage Paul in continuing his ministry in Corinth. Paul *responds* by staying in Corinth a year and a half instructing the believers. Thus, the dream is a command-encouragement dream that prompts Paul’s lengthy ministry in Corinth.

The dream of Paul (23:11). Paul has been at the center of several disturbances in Jerusalem (21:7ff; 22:22ff; 23:6ff) and is in Roman custody for his own safety. As he is in Roman custody, Paul experiences a dream:

Now on the following night the Lord stood by him and said (τῆ δὲ ἐπιούσῃ νυκτὶ ἐπιστάς αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος εἶπεν), “Take courage! For just as you testified about me in Jerusalem, in the same way it is also necessary that you testify in Rome.”

The *scene-setting* assumes much of the context and is minimal: “on the following night.” There is no *dream terminology* but the position of the dream figure is noted (“standing by him”), which is feature common in visitant dream reports. The function of the dream is two-fold: (1) to encourage Paul in his present circumstance and (2) to foretell Paul’s eventual arrival and testimony in Rome. Rhetorically, the prediction of Paul testifying in Rome provides the reader with an anticipation of its fulfillment, an anticipation that will be intensified as the

plot continues with several circumstances that threaten Paul's Roman destination.²³

The dream of Paul (27:23-26). This dream is actually reported in a speech by Paul. Paul is aboard a ship being taken as a prisoner to Rome. The sea voyage had proved to be quite difficult with raging storms causing the crew to throw provisions overboard. Paul addresses those on board in order to encourage them:

I urge you now to take courage, for there will not be one loss of life from among you but [only] the ship. For in this night (ταύτη τῆ νυκτὶ) an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship stood by me (παρέστη . . . μοι) and said, "Do not fear, Paul, it is necessary that you stand before Caesar. And behold, God has graciously given (κεχάρισται) you all those who are sailing with you." Therefore, take courage, men! For have faith in God that it will be in the same way as it was spoken to me.

Once again, there is no *dream terminology*, but the time (night) and reference to the position of the dream figure ("standing by me") are common features of a dream narrative. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream by an angel of God, and Paul's *response* is one of faith in the dream message. Like the previous dream narrative, this dream functions to give encouragement to Paul and the other travelers and to predict his testimony before the emperor in Rome.

Summary. The four dream reports in the Acts of the Apostles are all visitant dreams experienced by Paul; two visitations from "the Lord" (18:9-11; 23:11), one from an "angel of God" (27:23-26), and one from a "man of

²³For example, the conspiracy to kill Paul (23:12-31), Paul's lengthy imprisonment in Caesarea (24:22-27), and Paul's difficult sailing and shipwreck (27:1--28:10).

Macedonia" (16:6-10). One dream is a command-directive dream that gives guidance for further evangelization (16:6-10). Three of the dreams function to provide encouragement to Paul and/or others (18:9-11; 23:11; 27:23-26). Two of these same dreams also predict Paul's witness in Rome (23:11; 27:23-26).

The dream of 27:23-26 raises questions, however, since its fulfillment – testifying before Caesar – is not narrated. The book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest, "preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things about the Lord Jesus Christ [to those who visited him] with all boldness and without hindrance;" there is no appearance before Caesar. An ancient audience, though, would expect the fulfillment of the dream prediction. And yet, it is exactly that anticipation which dreams provoke in readers that allows Luke to end Acts in such an open-ended manner. Charles Talbert nicely describes the rhetorical nature of this open-endedness:

Narrative suspension is a literary device whereby the author, by failing to bring certain narrative data to their resolution, hinders the closure of the narrative world for the reader. The closure must be achieved by the reader, who does so by finishing the story in consonance with its plot.²⁴

In regards to appearing before Caesar, the literary device of the dream narrative (prediction) functions with the literary device of narrative suspension (imagined fulfillment).

²⁴Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Crossroad), 235. Cf. also Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 2:353-357.

*Plutarch's Parallel Lives*²⁵

Generally dated during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (98-117), Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* (παράλληλοι βίοι)²⁶ is a series of comparative biographies of celebrated Greeks and Romans. His purpose in writing *Parallel Lives* is to display the virtue – and sometimes vice – of these great figures so as to reveal their character (*Alex.* 1.2-3). Such demonstrations of virtue are in turn to be admired and emulated (*Tim.* praef.; *Per.* 1.1 – 2.4). Plutarch follows a general pattern in narrating his *Lives*: family and birth; education and entrance into public life; greatest moments; changes in fortune; and latter years and death.²⁷ Where it fits his purposes, Plutarch includes dream narratives; and as Frederick Brenk observes, Plutarch often manipulates the dream reports of his sources for biographical purposes, emphasizing the psychological state and decision making process of the dreamer.²⁸

²⁵Translations of Plutarch are mine or modified translation of Perrin, LCL. The following works are helpful introductions to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*: Barbara Scardigli (ed.), *Essays on Plutarch's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Timothy E. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); R. H. Barrow, *Plutarch and His Times* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1967), 51-65; and Donald Andrew Frank Moore Russell, "Plutarch," *OCD* 1200-1201.

²⁶The designation "Parallel Lives" comes from Plutarch himself; see *Thes.* 1.1 and *Pel.* 2.4

²⁷Russell, "Plutarch," 1201.

²⁸Frederick E. Brenk, "The Dreams of Plutarch's Lives," *Latomus* 34 (1975): 336-349, esp. 338, 343-347.

This survey of dreams in Plutarch only looks at the biographies of Themistocles, Alexander, and Caesar, though the summary will cross-reference other dreams in Plutarch's *Lives*.

The dream of Themistocles (*Them.* 26.2-4). This dream comes at a time when Themistocles is a fugitive, having been accused of treason by the Athenians. At the time of the dream, however, he is receiving hospitality from a certain Nicogenes. The dream report is preceded by a meal scene, in which a servant becomes inspired and prophesies, "Night shall speak; night shall counsel; night shall give victory." The dream report immediately follows:

And after these things Themistocles went to bed and saw a dream (ὄναρ). It seemed (ἔδοξεν) that a serpent wound itself along over his body and crept up to his neck. Then as soon as it touched his face it became an eagle and enveloped him with its wings and lifted him on high and bore him a long distance, when there appeared as it were a golden herald's wand, on which it set him securely down, freed from helpless terror and distress.

There is no interpretation offered for this symbolic dream, but its meaning is unfolded in the subsequent narration. In order to get Themistocles out of the country safely, the host Nicogenes has Themistocles placed in a mobile tent that was routinely used to transport women so that they would not be seen. Plutarch explains that this custom came about because the Persians "are savage and harsh in their jealous watchfulness over their women." So, at every instance when the traveling party was stopped and questioned, Themistocles's servants simply replied that they were carrying one of the king's prized Hellenic women; and Themistocles was securely led out of Greece. The dream portends Themistocles's

deliverance from his present, threatening circumstance. Also, as in other Greco-Roman literature, the dream is associated with prophecy.

The dream of Themistocles (*Them.* 30.1-3). The context for this dream report is a plot against Themistocle's life. Plutarch relates how Pisidian mercenaries were waiting in a village called the Lion's Head (Λεοντοκεφάλος) to assassinate Themistocles. The dream report is then given:

It is said that while he was lying down at midday the mother of the gods appeared in a dream and said (τὴν μητέρα τῶν θεῶν ὄναρ φανεῖσαν εἰπεῖν), "O Themistocles, avoid a head of lions (κεφαλῆς λέοντων), so that you may not come upon a lion. And in return for this I demand of you [your daughter] Mnesiptolema to be my handmaiden.

The *reaction* of Themistocles is characterized as "being greatly confused" (διαταράσσω), but nonetheless he *responds* by supplicating to the goddess and taking another route to bypass the Lion's Head. The assassins adjust their plans, but through a series of events occasioned by his detour their plot is foiled and Themistocles is saved.

The *dream proper* is a visitant dream by the "mother of the gods," who is known by several names such as Rhea, Cybele, or Dindymené.²⁹ The message, given in direct discourse, is both a warning and command. The warning comes as a riddle and wordplay on the village's name Lion's Head (Λεοντοκεφάλος), the name of which the reader has already been introduced. Themistocles is to avoid κεφαλὴ λέοντων so as not to encounter a λέων. Though initially

²⁹See note by Perrin, LCL.

confused by the riddle, Themistocles presumably discerns its meaning and heeds its warning. The command is that Themistocles give his daughter to the ministry of the goddess in return for the divine protection. Themistocles not only complies with this command, but he also builds a temple in honor of the goddess. Like the dream in 26.2-3, this dream also functions to deliver and protect Themistocles.

Dreams of Olympias and Philip (Alex. 2.2-3.). Following the conventions of encomiastic rhetoric, Plutarch begins his *bios* of Alexander the Great by relating his ancestry (2.1) and the circumstances of his birth (2.1 – 3.5), which includes two dreams by his father and mother. Having stated that Philip and Olympias, Alexander's mother, were betrothed (ἀρμόζω), the *scene-setting* and the *dream proper* are recounted:

The bride, on the night before they were to come together in the bride-chamber, thought (ἔδοξε) that a peal of thunder and a lightning bolt fell upon her womb, and from the lightning strike a great fire was kindled, and then after having burst into flames everywhere it was extinguished.

The second dream follows directly upon the report of the first one:

At a later time after the marriage, Philip saw a dream (εἶδεν ὄναρ): he was putting a seal on [his] wife's womb; and the emblem of the seal, as he thought, had the image of a lion.

Olympias's dream is not given an interpretation, but the dream can be interpreted in light of Alexander's life: he conquers the world in a short time but dies at a young age. Also, the lightning may suggest a birth of divine origin. This possibility is more suggestive when Plutarch shortly recounts how Philip often

saw a snake sleeping near Olympias, thinking that she might be “the partner to a superior being” (κρείττονη συνούσης) (2.4). Philip’s dream, on the other hand, is submitted to the diviners (μάντεις) for interpretation. They conclude that the dream indicates a need for Philip to be guarded of his marriage, but the famed diviner Aristander of Telmessus rightly interprets the dream to signify the pregnancy of Olympias, “since no seal is put upon what is empty and the child conceived would have a bold and lion-like nature.” Both dreams are a motif common to birth stories, which function to portend the future greatness of the unborn child.

The dream of Dareius (Alex. 18.4). In recounting the military campaigns of Alexander, Plutarch describes a dream that comes to the Persian king Dareius. The *scene-setting* includes the mental state of the dreamer: Dareius was quite optimistic about his military engagement against Alexander, for “a certain dream (τινος ὀνείρου θαρρύνοντος αὐτον) had encouraged him.” Before narrating the *dream proper*, however, Plutarch discloses that Dareius’s encouragement is misplaced, because the magi have interpreted the dream “for favor rather than according to the truth” (πρὸς χάριν . . . μᾶλλον ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἰκός). Thus, the fulfillment and meaning of the dream are insinuated before its reporting. The *dream proper* is introduced by the customary δοκέω:

It seemed (ἔδοξε) that the Macedonian battle lines were engulfed with a fire, and that Alexander, wearing a robe that he himself [i.e., Darieus] used to wear when he was a royal courier, was serving him; and [then] Alexander went into the temple of Belus and disappeared.

In contrast to the magi's favorable interpretation, the dream actually signifies Alexander's conquering army, rule of Asia, and sudden – but glorious – end. For the reader of Plutarch's *Alexander*, the proper interpretation of Dareius's dream has already been provided in light of the dream of Olympias (2.2). The fire of the Macedonian battle lines is a manifestation of the all encompassing fire initiated by the lightening bolt in Olympias's dream. Also, both the dreams of Olympias and Dareius signify a swift end to Alexander's life. Thus, in addition to the dream being a common motif of battles and future reign, the dream of Dareius also functions within the narrative as a confirmation and partial fulfillment of Olympias's dream.

The dreams of Alexander and the Tyrians (Alex. 24.3-5). In recounting Alexander's siege of the city of Tyre, Plutarch reports two dreams of Alexander and a dream of "many Tyrians;" all the dreams signify Alexander's inevitable capture of Tyre. The first dream of Alexander is initially reported with the *scene-setting* indicating the time of the dream: during the besieging of Tyre. Although the figure of Heracles is present, the *dream proper* should be considered a symbolic dream:

[Alexander] saw a dream (εἶδεν ὄναρ): Heracles was stretching out his hand to him from the wall and calling him.

The dream report lacks a *reaction/response* of the dreamer or an interpretation; the narrative simply continues by reporting immediately the dream of the Tyrians:

And it seemed (ἔδοξεν) to many of the Tyrians during [their] sleep that Apollo said that he was going away to Alexander because the events in the city were not pleasing to him.

This dream report does include a *response*: the Tyrians fastened the statue of Apollo to its pedestal, considering the god a deserter (αὐτομολουντων) and an Alexandrite (Ἀλεξανδριστῆς). Both these dreams contribute to the understanding that Alexander's military endeavor is sanctioned and assured by the divine.

The second dream of Alexander is another symbolic dream, and its reporting is given directly after the response of the Tyrians:

And Alexander saw another vision during [his] sleep (ἑτέραν δὲ ὄψιν Ἀλέξανδρος εἶδε κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους): it seemed (ἔδόκει) to him that a satyr (σάτυρος) appeared and mocked him at a distance. [Alexander] attempted to take him but he escaped; but finally, after much coaxing and chasing, he surrendered.

The dream is then interpreted by the diviners, who base their interpretation on the word satyr (σάτυρος); the diviners say, "Tyre will be yours" (Σὴ γενήσεται **Τύρος**). Thus, all three dreams portend Alexander's victory and conquest of the city Tyre, which is subsequently narrated (25.1-2).

The dream of Alexander (Alex. 26.3). This dream of Alexander provides inspiration and instruction about where to establish a new city in Egypt that would come to be known as Alexandria. The context for the dream is two-fold. First, as part of the spoils of defeating the Persian king Darius, Alexander receives a small, valuable coffer in which he places his copy of Homer's *Iliad*

(26.1). Second, Plutarch notes that after his conquest of Egypt Alexander intends to begin construction of the new city on a location advised by his architects.

Plutarch then reports the dream as follows:

Then, in the night as he was sleeping, he saw a marvelous vision (ὄψιν εἶδε θαυμαστήν): A man with very grey hair and an honorable appearance seemed (ἔδοξεν) to be standing by him and speaking these words:

‘Now, there is an island in much-dashing sea,
in front of Egypt; And they call it Pharos.

Thus, he immediately rose up and went to Pharos (which then was still an island, a little above the Canobic mouth of the Nile, but now it has been joined to the mainland by a causeway).

The *scene-setting* of this visitant dream assumes much of the context and simply states the time of the dream (night while asleep) and the activity of sleep. The *dream terminology* is notable for its further description with an adjective, ὄψις θαυμαστή. The *dream proper* includes the conventional δοκέω, but it does not introduce the dream as expected. Instead, it is positioned after the description of the dream figure, which has the effect of emphasizing the visitant, who is none other than Homer.³⁰ Not only does the description bring to mind Homer, but the reader also recognizes the identity as Homer with the mention of Homer’s *Iliad* in the previous paragraph (26.1) and the dream message itself, which is a quote from the *Odyssey* (4.354). Alexander’s *reaction* is described in terms of ἐξανίστημι (“rising up [out of bed]”), and after a narrative aside, Plutarch relates Alexander’s *response* of having the city established at Pharos in

³⁰J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* (2d ed.; London: Bristol Classical Press, 1999), 67.

accordance to the dream (24.4). On the one hand, the dream functions in the narrative as instruction on the best location of Alexander's city. But on the other hand, the dream contributes to the glory and legend of the great city of Alexandria.

The dream of Caesar (Caes. 32.6). This dream is reported in relation to Caesar's decisive crossing of the Rubicon River, which initiated a civil war that would ultimately leave him the sole ruler of the Roman world. Plutarch goes to great lengths to portray Caesar's inner struggle to take that "fearful step" (ἡ δεινός; 32.4). Caesar, though, eventually makes the decision to cross into Italy with resolve and abandonment with the infamous words, "Let the die be cast" (32:6). It is after Plutarch's narration of the crossing that he relates the following:

Now it is said (λέγεται) that on the night before the crossing he saw an unlawful dream (ὄναρ ἰδεῖν ἔκθεσμον), for he seemed (ἐδόκει) to be having incestuous intercourse with his own mother.

Other writers report that this dream took place earlier in Caesar's life, while he was a quaestor serving in Spain.³¹ Moreover, they offer a favorable interpretation of the dream: to rule over one's country or empire. Plutarch, however, has relocated the dream to the Rubicon crossing and has not offered an interpretation. Not only does the dream contribute to Plutarch's depiction of Caesar's anxiety and uncertainty about the crossing, it also draws the reader into this psychological apprehension. By ending this critical juncture in the story of Caesar with this dream, Plutarch makes the prudence of Caesar's decision to

³¹Suetonius, *Caes.* 32.9 and Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 41.24.

march into Italy much more ambiguous, especially with his characterization of the dream as “unlawful” (ἐκθεσμος) and his not offering an interpretation. As Frederick Brenk states, “[T]he immediate tone is one of anxiety, lawlessness, and ruthlessness.”³² Perhaps the ambiguity of the dream’s meaning reflects the imprecision of judging Caesar’s achievement: Caesar was triumphant in the civil war but was assassinated before he could experience the benefits his rule.³³

The dream of Calpurnia (Caes. 63.5-7). Plutarch reports the dream of Caesar’s wife Calpurnia as a part of his larger recounting of the “wondrous signs and apparitions” (σημεία θαυμαστά καὶ φάσματα; 63.1) that foreshadowed Caesar’s death. Plutarch recounts how on the night before his death, Caesar noticed his wife “uttering indistinct words and inarticulate groans in her sleep; for it seemed (ἐδόκει) that she was holding her murdered husband in her arms and wailing for him.” The lack of a full dream report may be due to Plutarch’s narrating the events according to Caesar’s perspective. There are several portentous circumstances that Caesar fails to heed or consider, but Calpurnia’s dream gives him pause. At her request, he consults the diviners (οἱ μάντις), who confirm through sacrifices the unfavorable omen. Caesar then decides to

³²Brenk, “The Dreams of Plutarch’s Lives,” 346.

³³Cf. Plutarch, Caes. 69.1: “At the time of this death Caesar was fully fifty-six years old, but he has survived Pompey not much more than four years, while of the power and dominion which he had sought all his life at so great risks, and barely achieved at last, of this he had reaped no fruit but the name of it only, and a glory which had awakened envy on the part of his fellow citizens” (Perrin, LCL). Noted in Brenk, “The Dreams of Plutarch’s Lives,” 346.

stay at home and send Anthony to the senate. But the dream proves fateful, and through a set of circumstances Caesar goes to the Senate where he is assassinated. As is common in Greco-Roman literature, the death of an individual is portended by a dream.

The dream of Cinna (*Caes.* 68.2-3). After the death of Caesar and the reading of his will, which benefited every Roman citizen, a riot broke out against the conspirators, fueled by gratitude for Caesar's generous benefaction. Plutarch recounts how a friend of Caesar, a certain Cinna, became a victim of the unrest. This fate was portended in a dream. The *scene-setting* identifies the dreamer (Cinna), the time of the dream ("the previous night"), and the dream terminology ("a strange vision;" ὄψιν . . . ἄτοπον). The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream introduced by δοκέω:

For it seemed (ἐδόκει) that he was invited to a dinner by Caesar and that when he excused himself Caesar led him by the hand, though Cinna was not wanting to go and resisted.

The reporting of the *reaction* to the dream is delayed until it is noted that Cinna decided to go hear the reading of Caesar's will in spite his "misgivings (ὑφορώμενός) arising from his vision." An interpretation of the dream is not offered, but the event of Cinna being mistaken for one of Caesar's assassins and thereby being killed by the mob explains the dream: Cinna follows Caesar in death. Thus, by presaging the death of Cinna the dream functions similarly to other dreams in ancient literature.

Summary. Of the dreams surveyed here in Plutarch's *Lives*, eight are symbolic dreams (*Them.* 26.2-4; *Alex.* 2.2-3 [2]; 18.4; 24.3-5 [2]; *Caes.* 32.6; 68.2-3; cf. *Cim.* 18.2-4; *Per.* 3.2; *Alc.* 39.1-2; *Ant.* 16.3; *Eum.* 6.4-7), two are visitant dreams (*Them.* 30.1-3; *Alex.* 26.3; cf. *Arist.* 11.5; 19.2; *Per.* 13.8; *Cor.* 24.??; *Rom.* 2.4), and one is not narrated (*Caes.* 63.5-7; cf. *Ant.* 22.??). The dream terminology for these dream reports include ὄναρ (*Them.* 26.2-4; 30.1-3; *Alex.* 2.3; 24.3; *Caes.* 32.6; cf. *Cim.* 18.2-4; *Per.* 13.8), ὄψις (*Alex.* 24.4-5; 26.3; *Caes.* 68.2-3; cf. *Alc.* 39.1-2; *Eum.* 6.4-7), and ὄνειρος (*Alex.* 18.4); and seven dreams proper are introduced by δοκέω (*Them.* 26.2-4; *Alex.* 2.2; 18.4; 26.3; *Caes.* 32.6; 63.5-7; 68.2-3; cf. *Arist.* 11.5; 19.2; *Cim.* 18.2-4; *Per.* 3.2; *Alc.* 39.1-2; *Eum.* 6.4-7). The function of these dreams varies. The two dreams in *Themistocles* function to protect the dreamer (26.2-4; 30.1-3; cf. *Ant.* 22.2; *Rom.* 2.4). The dreams in *Alexander* all relate to his future reign or greatness (2.2-3 [2]) or victory in battle (18.4; 24.3-5 [2]; cf. *Arist.* 11.5; *Eum.* 6.4-7), with the exception of one dream that is a command-directive dream as to the where to establish the city of Alexandria (26.3). Two dreams in *Caesar* portend death (63.5-6; 68.2-3; cf. *Arist.* 19.2; *Cim.* 18.2-4; *Alc.* 39.1-2; *Ant.* 16.3), while one dream is uncharacteristically ambiguous (32.6) – though the dream prompts action at a critical juncture in the narrative of *Caesar*.

*Suetonius's Lives of the Caesars*³⁴

Suetonius's *De vita Caesarum* (or *Caesares*) was published around 120 and offers an evaluation of twelve Roman emperors in light of social and philosophical expectations of imperial conduct. Though varied in how each life is treated, the *Caesares* generally follows a three part pattern: (1) an account of family, birth, childhood, education, early career, and ascension to power; (2) an analysis of the performance as emperor by non-chronological, thematic essays; and (3) an account of removal from power and death with an epilogue of honors or other random appendices.³⁵ In general, dreams are reported by Suetonius in relation to the first part, which usually portends an emperor's good fortune and future reign, and the third part, which usually portends the end of an emperor's reign or his death. This review of dreams in Suetonius is facilitated by considering dreams in *Divus Julius* and *Divus Augustus*; other dreams in the *Caesares* will be noted in the summary.

The dream of Julius (Jul. 7.2). While serving as a quaestor in Spain, Julius sees a statue of Alexander and bemoans that he has done nothing noteworthy at

³⁴Translations of Suetonius are from Rolfe, LCL; a few of these translations have been slightly modified. For introductory matters of Suetonius's *Lives of the Caesars*, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius* (2d ed.; London: Bristol Classical Press, 1995); R. G. Lewis, "Suetonius' 'Caesares' and Their Literary Antecedents," *ANRW* 33.5:3623-3674; and Keith R. Bradley, "Suetonius (Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus)," *OCD* 1451-1452.

³⁵Lewis, "Suetonius' 'Caesares'," *ANRW* 33.5:3641; see also Bradley, "Suetonius," 1452. It should be noted that even in the beginning and ending accounts of some *vitae*, chronology is disrupted in favor of topical discussions.

the same age when Alexander had conquered the world. So, he requests a discharge in order to pursue more ambitious endeavors back in Rome. Suetonius then relates that Julius had a dream.

When he was dismayed by a dream (*somnio*) the following night – for he thought that he had offered violence to his mother – the diviners (*coniectores*) inspired him with high hopes by their interpretation, which was: that he was destined to rule the world, since the mother whom he had seen in his power was none other than the earth, which is regarded as the common parent of all mankind.³⁶

By placing the *dream proper* as a parenthetical statement between the introductory genitive absolute clause and the main clause, Suetonius downplays the *dream proper* and emphasizes the interpretation. Because of this narrative arrangement, the form of the dream report is distorted. The *reaction* is actually mentioned first (“dismayed”) along with a reference to the time of the dream (“following night”) in the genitive absolute clause. The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream that portends, according to the professional interpreters, the future reign of Julius.

The dreams of Julius and Calpurnia (Jul. 81.3). In this chapter, Suetonius reports a number of “unmistakable signs” (*evidentibus prodigiis*; 81.1) that indicated the murder of Caesar. Among these omens, Suetonius reports the dreams of Julius and his wife Calpurnia:

In fact the very night before his murder he saw (*visus est*) now that he was flying above the clouds, and now that he was clasping the hand of Jupiter; and his wife Calpurnia thought (*imaginata*) that the pediment of their house fell, and that her stabbed husband was in her arms.

³⁶Cf. Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.78: “It is also fortunate for every demagogue and public figure, for a mother signifies one’s native country.”

Suetonius relates these dreams simply as part of the popular traditions surrounding the death of Julius Caesar, and he assumes his readers are familiar with them.

The dreams of Augustus (Aug. 91). As a part of a larger section in which Suetonius illustrates Augustus's positive attitude toward religious matters (90-96), chapter 91 touches upon Augustus's respect for dreams by providing some examples of significant dreams. The first example is a reference to a dream by a friend of Augustus (91.1).

At the battle of Philippi, though he had made up his mind not to leave his tent because of illness, he did so after all when warned by a friend's dream (*amici somnio monitus*); fortunately, as it turned out, for his camp was taken and when the enemy rushed in, his litter was stabbed through and through and torn to pieces, in the belief that he was still lying there ill.

The *dream proper* is not narrated, but it in some way communicates a warning that Augustus's life is in danger. The emphasis is on Augustus's *response* to the dream, which results in being delivered from the threat. The dream functions to protect Augustus.

The other dream that Suetonius uses to demonstrate Augustus's respect for dreams is a cultic dream (91.2). Once again, a narration of the *dream proper* is lacking, though one may infer that it is a visitant dream.

Being in the habit of making constant visits to the temple of Jupiter the Thunderer, which he had founded on the Capitol, he dreamed (*somniauit*) that Jupiter Capitolinus complained that his worshippers were being taken from him, and that [Augustus] replied that he had only given him the Thunderer for his porter; and accordingly he presently fastened bells to the gable of the temple, because these commonly hung at gates of great houses.

It is uncertain whether the dream appears to Augustus during one of his visits to the temple, but – as shown in chapter 2 – such an experience was quite common in the Greco-Roman world. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream and includes a reply by Augustus, but the form of indirect discourse lessens the dramatic portrayal of the dream proper. Once again, the emphasis is on Augustus's *response* of attaching bells to the temple in order to attract more worshippers.

Dreams concerning Augustus's future greatness (Aug. 94). In this chapter, which is still in the context of Augustus's positive attitude toward religion, Suetonius recounts the various portents that signified Augustus's "future greatness and uninterrupted good fortune" (*futura magnitudo et perpetua felicitas*; 94.1). Among these portents are several dreams.

The first two dreams described by Suetonius are the dreams of Augustus's mother and father, Atia and Octavius (94.4). The dreams are symbolic dreams and occur while Atia is pregnant with Augustus.

Atia, before she gave him birth, dreamed (*somniavit*) that her vitals stretched to the stars and spread over the whole extent of land and sea. And his father Octavius dreamed that the sun rose from Atia's womb.

These dreams are further examples of the birth *topos* developed by dream reports.

Octavius experiences another dream after Augustus was born (94.5).

While leading an army through Thrace, Octavius consults diviners about his new born son. The diviners offer libation at an altar that results in an omen that had

never before occurred except for Alexander the Great. Octavius then experiences a symbolic dream.

The very next night he saw a vision (*videre visus*) that his son appeared to him in a guise more majestic than that of mortal man, with the thunderbolt, sceptre, and insignia of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, wearing a radiant crown and mounted upon a laurel-wreathed chariot drawn by twelve horses of surpassing whiteness.

This dream functions in association with the libation omen to signify Augustus's future reign; an association of dreams and other divinatory practices, particularly oracles, is common in Greco-Roman literature.

Suetonius also recounts three dreams by prominent Romans when Augustus was a youth. Two dreams are experienced by the Roman consul Quintus Catulus and are reported together (94.8):

After Quintus Catulus had dedicated the Capitol, he had dreams (*somniavit*) on two nights in succession: first, that Jupiter Optimus Maximus called aside one of a number of boys of good family, who were playing around his altar, and put in the fold of his toga an image of Roma, which he was carrying in his hand; the next night he saw the same body in the lap of Jupiter of the Capitol, and that when he had ordered that he be removed, the god warned him to desist, declaring that the boy was being reared to be the guardian (*tutorem*) of his country.

Suetonius then relates that on the next day Catulus meets Augustus for the first time and is amazed at the striking resemblance between Augustus and the boy in the dream.

The final dream of these portents is the dream experienced by the famed orator Cicero (94.9). While accompanying Gaius Caesar to the Capitol, Cicero describes a dream that he had the previous night: "A boy of noble countenance

was let down from heaven on a golden chain and, standing at the door of the temple, was given a whip by Jupiter.” Just as Cicero finishes recounting the dream and enters the Capitol, he sees for the first time Augustus, who was with Julius Caesar, and recognizes him as the boy in the dream.

Summary. In Suetonius’s *Caesares*, there are both symbolic (*Jul.* 7.2; 81.3 [2]; *Aug.* 94.4 [2]; 94.5; 94.8; 94.9; cf. *Cal.* 57.3; *Nero* 46.1; *Vesp.* 5.5; 25; *Dom.* 15.3; 23.2) and visitant (*Aug.* 91.2; cf. *Tib.* 74; *Galb.* 4.3; 18.2; *Vesp.* 7.2) dreams; some dreams are not narrated (*Aug.* 91.1; cf. *Nero* 7.1; *Galb.* 9.2; *Otho* 7.2). As stated in the introduction to Suetonius, most dream reports in the *Caesares* either portend an emperor’s future good fortune and reign (*Jul.* 7.2; *Aug.* 91.1; 94.4 [2]; 94.5; 94.8; 94.9; cf. *Galb.* 4.3; 9.2; *Vesp.* 5.5; 7.2; 25) or signify the end of his reign and/or his death (*Jul.* 81.3 [2]; cf. *Tib.* 74; *Cal.* 57.3; *Nero* 46.1; *Galb.* 18.2; *Otho* 7.2; *Dom.* 15.3; 23.2). The dreams (91.1; 91.2) that illustrate Augustus’s respect for religion are exceptions to this pattern.

Dreams in Greco-Roman Fiction

The following analysis of dreams in Greco-Roman fiction will be based on two Greek novels and two Christian apocryphal Acts. Unlike the previous summaries, which followed each text, this section will have only two summaries, one summarizing the Greek novels and the other summarizing the apocryphal Acts.

*Chariton's Chaereas and Callirhoe*³⁷

Chariton's romance novel was written in the first or second century C.E. As characteristic of other romance novels, Chariton tells the fictional love story of his protagonists Chaereas and Callirhoe in terms of their beauty and falling in love, their marriage, their separation and subsequent adventures that present various threats to their lives and marriage, and their eventual reunion. Dream narratives are one of the literary devices employed by Chariton to develop this plot.

The dreams of Theron and Leonas (1.12.5, 10). Theron is a bandit who raids a tomb to acquire its valuables. In addition to the treasure, he finds alive the protagonist Callirhoe, who had been placed there after it was assumed that she was dead. Theron resolves to return to his ship the following day and throw Callirhoe into the sea. That night, however, he has a dream: "When he fell asleep he saw a dream (κοιμηθεὶς δὲ ἐνύπνιον εἶδε), a closed door; so he decided to wait for that day." As a consequence, Theron delays the drowning of Callirhoe one day, and during that day he becomes acquainted with a certain Leonas, the administrator (διοικητής) of the widower Dionysius' household. Sensing an opportunity, Theron proposes the sale of Callirhoe to Leonas for Dionysius' services. Leonas responds, "Some god has delivered you to me to be

³⁷Translations of Chariton are modifications of the translation by B. P. Reardon in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 21-124. Also, see his introduction to Chariton for introductory issues and bibliography (17-21).

my benefactor. Why, you are setting out before me in reality what I dreamed about (ὠνειροπόλουν)!"

This episode is an example of a double-dream report; two people have separate dreams which prompt a circumstance that is mutually beneficial.³⁸ Theron's symbolic dream is minimally narrated. The *scene-setting* is simply states the activity of sleeping; the *dream terminology* is ἐνύπνιον; and the *dream proper* (closed door) is merely an appositional phrase to ἐνύπνιον. The emphasis is on Theron's *response*, his decision to postpone his killing of Callirhoe. Leonas's dream is not narrated but only referenced (ὄνειροπολέω). Though both Theron and Leonas benefit from their respective dreams, the real function of the dreams is to benefit Callirhoe: she will not be thrown into the sea. On the other hand, this change in circumstances also advances the plot to a greater threat of Chaereas and Callirhoe's love: Callirhoe's marriage to Dionysius.

The dream of Dionysius (2.1.2). In some respects, the dream of Dionysius is also connected with the two former dreams. After having purchased Callirhoe from the bandit Theron, Leonas comes to his master Dionysius to give him the good news about the newly obtained servant. Before Leonas can tell him, however, Dionysius describes to Leonas a dream that he has experienced.

"This is the first good night's sleep I have had since my poor wife died. For I indeed clearly saw her (εἶδον αὐτὴν ἐναργῶς) as if I were awake, though she was taller and more beautiful. I thought (ἔδοξα) that it was the first day of our married life; I was bringing her home after our wedding, from

³⁸See above, pp. 118-124.

my estate by the sea, and you were singing the wedding song.” Leonas cried out before his master had even finished: “You’re a lucky man, sir, asleep and awake! You’re just going to hear the very thing you’ve dreamed about.”

The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream in which a scene is being acted out. As interpreted by the character Leonas, the dream portends Dionysius’s future love and relationship with Callirhoe. Just as Leonas sings the wedding song in the dream, he now announces the good news of acquiring the beautiful Callirhoe.

The dream of Callirhoe (2.3.5). Callirhoe has been taken to the country estate of Dionysius, but Dionysius has not yet met her. As Dionysius is traveling to the estate, “during that night Callirhoe beheld Aphrodite (ἡ Καλλιρόη τῆς νυκτὸς ἐκείνης θεασαμένη τὴν Ἀφροδίτην), and decided to pay homage to her again.” Callirhoe then goes to the local temple of Aphrodite, where Dionysius has also decided to visit. Thus, this first, chance meeting between Dionysius and Callirhoe is occasioned by a night vision of Aphrodite. It is uncertain whether this vision is while Callirhoe is asleep or awake, but the night setting suggests a dream.³⁹ The dream is a literary device that motivates character action that in turn develops the plot.

The dream of Callirhoe (2.9.1-6). Callirhoe discovers she is pregnant with Chaereas's child. She is separated from Chaereas and is the newly purchased slave of Dionysius. She anguishes over the decision to either kill the unborn child or allow it to live. At this point in the narrative, a dream report is given.

³⁹Reardon actually translates θεασαμένη τὴν Ἀφροδίτην as “had a dream about Aphrodite.”

All night long [Callirhoe] considered these things (ταῦτα λογιζομένη δι' ὅλης νυκτὸς), and as she did so, sleep stole over her momentarily, and a vision of Chaereas (εἰκὼν Χαϊρέου) stood over her, like him in every way, like him in stature and fair looks and voice, and wearing just such clothes. As he stood there, he said, "I entrust our son to you, my wife." He wanted to say more, but Callirhoe jumped up and tried to embrace him. So on her husband's advice, as she thought, she decided to rear her child.

The *scene-setting* of this dream narrative notes the time in which the dream occurs (night), the mental state of the dreamer Callirhoe (considering these things), and the activity of sleep. "These things" refer to the immediate context in which Callirhoe is contemplating whether or not to kill her unborn child. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream that identifies the dream figure (Chaereas) and describes his appearance and position. The dream message is given in direct discourse. Callirhoe's *reaction* is her impulse to embrace the image of Chaereas, which results in the message being interrupted. She *responds* to the dream by deciding to keep her unborn child. On the one hand, the dream functions to protect the child of Callirhoe and Chaereas. But the dream also contributes to plot development. The decision to keep the child leads Callirhoe to marry Dionysius, who is led to believe the child is his. This situation creates a new development in the novel's plot that will need to be resolved.

The dreams of Callirhoe (3.7.4; 4.1.1-3). These two dreams are treated together because they contribute to the same development in the plot. The first dream report comes right after the narration of Chaereas being placed in chains after his ship is attacked "in the middle of the night, set on fire, and destroyed" (3.7.3). The dream is reported as follows:

Chaereas stood over Callirhoe in a dream (Καλλιρόη δὲ ὄναρ ἐπέστη Χαϊρέας), chained and trying to approach her but unable to do so. She uttered in her sleep a loud, piercing cry of distress, “Come to me, Chaereas!”

Hearing of Chaereas for the first time, Dionysius – Callirhoe’s recently wedded husband – asks who she is calling for. Callirhoe explains that Chaereas is her first husband and that the chains in her dream signify that he is dead. She grieves deeply for Chaereas, and in turn Dionysius becomes jealous. The reader, of course, knows that Callirhoe has misinterpreted the dream. Her dream came at the same time Chaereas was captured and so reveals his actual circumstances.

The second dream report comes after Callirhoe has been falsely told that Chaereas died in the ship attack:

So Callirhoe spent that night weeping and wailing, mourning for Chaereas – though he was still alive. But for a short time she slept, and she saw a dream (μικρὸν δὲ καταδραθεῖσα ὄναρ ἑώρα): [she saw] a band of barbarian robbers bringing torches, and the ship ablaze, and herself rescuing Chaereas.

Because of Callirhoe's continued dreaming of Chaereas, Dionysius, as an act of self-service, suggests that Callirhoe erect a tomb for Chaereas. Callirhoe is persuaded and invites the whole town to observe a mock funeral for Chaereas. In attendance is Mithridates, who later becomes the ally of Chaereas and the adversary of Dionysius and schemes to reunite Chaereas and Callirhoe (see 4.2-7). Thus, the two dreams along with Callirhoe’s continuous grieving initiate actions that eventually will result in the reuniting of Chaereas and Callirhoe.

The dream of Callirhoe (5.5.5-7). Dionysius has accused Mithridates, the Persian governor of Caria, of a conspiracy to seduce Callirhoe, which is not true but misconstrued as Mithridates was acting on Chaereas's behalf. The accusation has found a hearing before the Babylonian king. On the night before the trial, Callirhoe experiences a dream:

She spent the whole day lamenting despondently to herself like this. When it came night she saw a dream (νυκτὸς δὲ ἐπελθούσης ὄναρ ἔβλεπεν): [she saw] herself in Syracuse entering Aphrodite's shrine, still a maiden; then returning from there and seeing Chaereas and her wedding day. She saw Syracuse all decked out with garlands and herself being escorted by her father and mother to the bridegroom's house. She was on the point of embracing Chaereas when she suddenly started up from her sleep. She called Plangon . . . and told her about the dream (τὸ ὄναρ). Plangon replied, "Take courage, madam – you should be glad! You have seen a good dream (καλὸν ἐνύπνιον); you will be freed from all your worries; for just as it seemed to you in the dream, in the same way it will happen while you awake. . . ."

The *scene-setting* describes her mental state (lamenting), the time of the dream (night), and the *dream terminology* (ὄναρ). The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream that re-enacts a past event: the wedding day of Chaereas and Callirhoe. Callirhoe's *reaction* is twofold: (1) attempt to embrace Chaereas and (2) tell the dream to her maidservant Plangon. Plangon provides a general – but positive – interpretation. Though the dream rehearses a past event, the meaning of the dream is prospective, foreshadowing the reunion of Callirhoe and Chaereas and their eventual return to their homeland.⁴⁰

⁴⁰MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London: Routledge, 1996), 35.

The dream of the Babylonian king (6.2.2). The court scene has now shifted from a case between Mithridates and Dionysius to a case between Dionysius and Chaereas: who is Callirhoe's rightful husband? Before the trial begins, the Babylonian king orders sacrifices because "a dream set over me and the royal gods are demanding sacrifice" (ὄναρ μοι . . . ἐπιστὰν βασίλειοι θεοὶ θυσίας ἀπαιτοῦσι). The emphasis is on the king's *response*, which is an elaborate religious ceremony even sacrificing for the first time to the god Eros. Such cultic command-dreams are common in the Greco-Roman world,⁴¹ but the sacrifice to Eros has a particular implication for the plot: the will of Eros will be fulfilled to the benefit of Chaereas and Callirhoe.

*Longus's Daphnis and Chloe*⁴²

Written in the second century C.E., Longus's romance is a pastoral novel that depicts the love story of the couple Daphnis and Chloe. Like the dream narratives in Chariton, the dreams in Longus prompt actions and circumstances that advance the plot.

The dream of Dryas and Lamon (1.7.1–8.2). When Daphnis is fifteen and Chloe is thirteen, both their fathers, Lamon and Dryas, experience an identical

⁴¹See Chapter 2.

⁴²Translations of Longus are modifications of the translation by Christopher Gill in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 288-348. Also, see his introduction to Longus for introductory issues and bibliography (285-288).

dream. Though the fathers have the dream separately, the dream is reported only once.

Dryas and Lamon in a single night saw the following dream (ὁ Δρύας καὶ ὁ Λάμων ἐπὶ μιᾶς νυκτὸς ὀρώσιν ὄναρ τοιόνδε τι): they thought (ἐδοκουν) that the Nymphs – the ones in the cave where the spring was, where Dryas found his child – were handing Daphnis and Chloe over to a very pretty boy, with a very arrogant manner, who had wings growing from his shoulders and carried little arrows and a miniature bow. The boy touched both of them with a single arrow, and for the future he commanded that Daphnis look after the herd of goats, and Chloe to look after the flock of sheep. Having seen this dream (τοῦτο τὸ ὄναρ ἰδόντες), they were upset at the thought that children were to become shepherds and goatherds, although their tokens had promised greater things. . . . After sharing with one another the dream and making a sacrifice in the Nymph's shrine to “the winged body” (they did not know his name), they sent the children out as shepherds with the flocks.

The *scene-setting* of this dream report identifies the dreamers (Dryas and Lamon), the time of the dream (night), and the *dream terminology* (ὄναρ). The *dream proper* is a symbolic dream that is introduced by the conventional δοκέω. Although it is a symbolic dream, it includes a command, which is more characteristic of a visitant or auditory dream. The dream indicates that Daphnis and Chloe will be the “victims” of Eros and experience the “sickness” of love. The dream also becomes the medium by which Eros commands that the children become shepherds. The initial *reaction* of Dryas and Lamon is one of detest (ἔχθω), for they were hoping for more from their discovered children than a pastoral life. They *respond*, however, with sacrifice and obedience. Thus, the dream functions to foreshadow the subsequent love between Daphnis and Chloe; it also reveals the source of that love, Eros. This love is initiated when they discover one

another tending to their respective herds, an occasion brought about by the command in the dream.

The dreams of Daphnis and Chloe (2.10.1). Daphnis and Chloe are experiencing the “pain” (ἀλγέω; 2.8.3) of love – not eating nor sleeping, and having a “fire” within them. An older acquaintance, Philetas, reveals to them the remedies (φάρμακα; 2.8.5) for love: kisses, embraces, and intercourse. The reference to dreams is then made in this context: “While thinking about these things – as you might expect – they also saw erotic dreams (καὶ ὄνειρα ἐώρων ἐρωτικά) about kisses and embraces; and what they hadn’t done in the day, they did in their dreams (ὄναρ): they lay naked with one another.” An ancient audience would recognize these dreams as sexual dreams that derive from dreamers’ passions and therefore are not divinatory or significant. The professional dream interpreter Artemidorus states it this way: “To have sexual intercourse with a woman with whom one is familiar and on intimate terms, if the dreamer is sexually attracted to and desirous of the woman, predicts (προαγορεύει) nothing at all because his desire for her has been aroused (οὐδὲν προαγορεύει διὰ τὴν ἐπιτεταμένην ἐπιθυμίαν).”⁴³ In the context of the narrative, however, these dreams could function as “healing” dreams, for they

⁴³Artemidorus, *Onir.* 1.78 (White). Interestingly, this is the exception to the rule. This statement comes in the context of explaining how sexual dreams are indeed significant (i.e., predict the future), see 1.78-80; 4.4; 4.20; 4.65.

provide the antidote for the illness of love: kisses, embraces, and intercourse. As shown in chapter 2, healing dreams were common in the Greco-Roman world.

The dream of Daphnis (2.23.1 – 24.1). Chloe has been kidnapped by a group of Methymnean soldiers, and Daphnis blames the Nymphs (2.22.1-4). At this point, Daphnis falls asleep and has a dream:

While he was talking in this way out of his tears and pain, a deep sleep overtook him. And three Nymphs stood by (ἐφίστανται) him; they were tall, beautiful women, half-naked and barefooted, their hair flowing free – just like their images. At first, they seemed to be feeling sorry for Daphnis. Then the eldest spoke encouraging (ἐπιρρωνύουσα) him. “Don’t blame us, Daphnis. We care about Chloe even more than you do. We were the ones who took pity on her when she was a child, and when she was lying in this cave, we saw to it that she was nursed. Even now we have paid attention to her situation and made sure she won’t be carried off to Methymna to become a slave and won’t become part of the spoils of war. You see Pan over there, his image set up under the pine, who’s never received from you even the hone of some flowers – well, we’ve asked him to be Chloe’s protector. He’s more used to army camps than we are, and he’s already left the country and fought a number of wars. And when he attacks the Methymneans, they won’t find him a good enemy to have. Don’t make yourself anxious. Get up and show yourself to Lamon and Myrtale. Like you, they’re lying on the ground, thinking that you are part of the plunder too. Chloe will come to you tomorrow, with the goats and with the sheep, and you will graze together and play the pipes together. All your other affairs will be taken care of by Eros.” Seeing and hearing such things, Daphnis jumped up out of his sleep; weeping with pleasure and pain, he kneeled down before the images of the Nymphs and promised that if Chloe were rescued, he would sacrifice the best of the she-goats.

The *scene-setting* indicates Daphnis’s mental state (talking out of his tears and pain) and notes that he has fallen asleep. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream, with the dream figures being described. The message of the dream is given in direct discourse and encourages Daphnis by assuring him that Pan will protect Chloe and that Chloe will be with him the following day. Daphnis’s *reacts* by

jumping up (ἀναπηδάω) from his sleep and *responds* sacrificing to both the Nymphs and Pan (2.24.2). Thus, the dream functions to encourage Daphnis by revealing the character and will of the divine to save Chloe.

The dream of the Methymnean general, Bryaxis (2.26.5–28.1). With Chloe being held captive by the Methymneans, Pan begins to disturb the soldier-bandits by many “apparitions and noises” (φανατάσματα καὶ ἀκούσματα; 2.26.5). The Methymneans know that Pan is the cause of the various commotions, but they do not know the reason. The Methymnean general, Bryaxis, then has a dream.

[A]round midday, the general – not without divine aid (οὐκ ἄθεεῖ) – fell asleep, and Pan himself appeared (ᾤφθη) and spoke in the following way: “Most unholy and impious of men, what madness has driven you to act so recklessly? You’ve filled the countryside I love with war; you’ve driven off herds of cows, goats, and sheep that are under my care; you’ve dragged from the altars a girl whom Eros wants to make the subject of a story (μῦθον); and you showed no shame before the Nymphs when they watched what you did, or before me – Pan. If you sail on with these spoils, you’ll never see Methymna, nor will you escape this piping that has made you so panic-stricken. Instead I shall sink your ship and make you food for the fish unless, immediately, you hand back Chloe to the Nymphs and the flocks to Chloe, both the goats and the sheep. So get up and put the girl ashore, together with the animals I spoke of. I myself will be your guide on sea, and hers on land.” Bryaxis (that was the general’s name) was very disturbed (τεθορυβημένος); he jumped up (ἀναπηδάω), summoned the ships’ captains, and ordered them to look for Chloe among the captives as soon as possible.

The *scene-setting* indicates the time of the dream (midday), the identity of the dreamer (the general), and the activity of sleep. A specific *dream term* is absent, but the verb ᾤφθη denotes a visionary experience. The *dream proper* is a visitant

dream of the god Pan, whose message is given in direct discourse. Pan commands that Chloe and her flock be set free and warns of the consequences if his will is not heeded. After describing the general's *reaction* (disturbed), the dream report concludes by noting the general's obedience *response* to the dream, finding and releasing Chloe. Thus, this command-warning dream functions to protect and rescue Chloe and to continue the love "story" of Daphnis and Chloe.

The dream of Daphnis (3.27.1 – 28.1). Daphnis is dejected because he can not financially compete with Chloe's rich suitors. This problem is resolved when Daphnis "again calls the Nymphs for help" and has a dream.

While sleeping in the night (καθεύδοντι νύκτωρ), they stood (αἰ ἐφίστανται) by him in the same form as before, and again it was the eldest who spoke. "Another god is taking care of Chloe's marriage. But we shall give you a present that will bring Dryas round. The boat that belonged to the young Methymneans – the one whose willow shoot your goats once ate – was blown far out to sea on that memorable day. But in the night a wind from the sea made the water rough, and the boat was cast ashore on the rocks of the headland. The boat itself and the bulk of the cargo were destroyed. But a purse, with three thousand drachmas in it, was thrown out by the waves and is lying, covered with seaweed, near a dead dolphin; that's why none of the passersby even goes near it, because they're keeping away from the stench of the decay. But you go up to it, and once you're there, pick it up, and once you've picked it up, use it as a present. For the time being, it is enough for you not to seem poor; later on, you will actually be rich." Saying this, they departed (συναπῆλθον) with the night. Now that it was day, Daphnis jumped up cheerfully (περιχαρής) and, with a lot of whistling, drove his goats to pasture.

The *scene-setting* is minimal (sleeping at night) but assumes Daphnis's plea to the Nymphs for help. Like the dream of 2.23.1 – 24.1, the *dream proper* is a visitant dream by the Nymphs with the eldest Nymph delivering the message. The message instructs Daphnis as to the location of a large sum of money. This

money will allow Daphnis to compete with the other suitors. The *dream proper* ends with a description of the Nymphs “departing” (σύνἀπέρχομαι). Daphnis *reacts* with a joyful (περιχαρής) disposition and *responds* by searching and finding the money as instructed by the Nymphs (2.24.2-3). The dream, thus, functions as a command-directive, revealing the location of money. As such, this dream also contributes to plot resolution and development; it provides a solution to Daphnis’s predicament and results Daphnis presenting the money to Dryas (Chloe’s father) and so acquiring the promise of Chloe (3.29-30).

The dream of Dionysophanes (4.34.1-3). The noble Dionysophanes has recently discovered that he is the real father of Daphnis. In order to provide an honorable wedding for the couple, it is necessary also to find Chloe’s real parents. With this problem at hand, Dionysophanes has a dream:

Dionysophanes, after much thought (μετὰ φροντίδα πολλήν), fell into a deep sleep and had following dream (ὄναρ . . . τοιόνδε γίνεται): It seemed (ἔδόκει) that the Nymphs were begging Eros to give his consent at last to their marriage and that Eros unstrung his little bow and took off his quiver. Eros then told Dionysophanes to ask all the best of the Mytileneans to come to a feast, and when he had filled the last mixing bowl, to show each person the tokens of Chloe’s identity – and then sing the wedding song. After seeing and hearing these things, Dionysophanes got up at daybreak and gave orders for the preparation of a glittering feast – drawing on the resources of the land and the sea, the marshes and the rivers – and invited as his guests all the best of the Mytileneans. When it was already night and the mixing bowl had been filled to make the libation to Hermes, a servant brought in the tokens on a silver tray and carried them round from left to right, showing them to everyone.

The *scene-setting* notes the identity of the dreamer (Dionysophanes), his mental state (much thought), and the activity of sleep. The dream terminology is ὄναρ,

and the *dream proper* is introduced by δοκέω. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream, though the beginning of the dream is a bit peculiar in that Dionysophanes is simply an on-looker to a conversation between the Nymphs and Pan. Pan, however, then addresses Dionysophanes, commanding him to host a feast for the leading citizens and show them the tokens of Chloe. Dionysophanes *responds* by doing exactly what Pan commanded. This obedience results in Chloe's real parents being discovered (4.34.4) and the couple being married (4.38). This dream, therefore, is a command-dream functioning to bring about plot resolution.

Summary

This summary of the Greek novels will deviate from the manner of the other summaries in this chapter. This deviation is predicated upon the distinctive character of the Greek novels, which are defined by the form of their plot – a combination of love and adventure. This plot is succinctly described by Reardon:

Hero and heroine are always young, wellborn, and handsome; their marriage is disrupted or temporarily prevented by separation, travel in distant parts, and a series of misfortunes, usually spectacular. Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance, and fidelity to one's partner, together with trust in the gods, will ultimately guarantee a happy [reunion].⁴⁴

⁴⁴B. P. Reardon, "Introduction" to *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (ed. B. P. Reardon; Berkley: University of California Press, 1989), 2.

It is in service of this formal plot that dreams function in the Greek novels; that is, dreams contribute to the development of the plot by creating circumstances that relate to (1) the initial love and/or marriage of the hero and heroine, (2) the separation or threat to the relationship, or (3) the happy reunion of the couple.⁴⁵

In the case of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, there are no dreams connected to the circumstances of the couple's initial love or marriage. There are five dreams, however, that move the plot to separation or threat, which is epitomized by Callirhoe's marriage to Dionysius: the dreams of Theron and Leonas that bring about the sale of Callirhoe (1.12.5, 10)⁴⁶; the dream of Dionysius that foreshadows his marriage to Callirhoe (2.1.2); Callirhoe's dream of Aphrodite, which prompts her chance meeting with Dionysius (2.3.5); and the dream of Callirhoe in relation to her unborn child, which brings about her marriage to Dionysius (2.9.6). Chariton contains four dreams that advance the plot or foreshadow the reunion of Chaereas and Callirhoe: Callirhoe's two dreams of Chaereas in chains and a victim of a pirate attack (3.7.4; 4.1.1-3)⁴⁷; the

⁴⁵This observation draws upon the work of Suzanne MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides*, 19-52, who studies the dreams in the Greek novels according to Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis the narrative framework of the Greek novels.

⁴⁶On the one hand, the dream of Theron actually protects Callirhoe from death, and so it could be seen as a more positive development in the plot. In the story world of the novels, however, death is a more preferable option than separation from one's lover, a situation that now Callirhoe finds herself by being sold to Leonas.

⁴⁷In one sense, these two dreams could be understood as relating to the separation/threat of Chaereas and Callirhoe, since they reveal the actual

dream of Callirhoe that foreshadows her reunion with Chaereas (5.5.5-7); and the dream of the Babylonian king, which results in a sacrifice to Eros (6.2.2).

The dreams in Longus can also be read according to the novelistic plot structure.⁴⁸ The initial love and meeting of Daphnis and Chloe is foreshadowed and prompted by the dream of Dryas and Lamon (1.7.1 – 8.2). There are no dreams that prompt actions that lead to separation or threat, but four dreams do provide protection or aid in the face of various threats and thus keep the plot moving towards its intended resolution: the dream of Daphnis, which reveals Chloe's deliverance from the Methymneans (2.23.1 – 24.1); the dream of the Methymnean general that commands Chloe's release (2.26.5 – 28.1); the dream of Daphnis, which reveals the location of money and allows Daphnis to compete with other suitors (3.27.1 – 28.1); and the dream of Dionysophanes, which prompts the discovery of Chloe's real parents and so allows the couple to marry properly (4.34.1-3).

Thus, on the one hand, dreams in the Greek novels are formally and functionally comparable to dreams in other Greco-Roman prose literature; they are symbolic or visitant dreams that portend future events or command certain

circumstances of Chaereas – Callirhoe even misinterprets the chains to mean Chaereas is dead. But as stated in the discussion of these two dreams, Dionysius's response to her dreaming actually initiates actions that will contribute to the eventual reunion of the couple.

⁴⁸Unlike the other novels, the couple's separation in Longus is not a physical separation but an intimate separation, which is not overcome until the couple is finally married. Thus, the novel does not work towards a happy reunion as much as an anticipated, marriage union.

actions. But on the other hand, these dream narratives in the Greek novels are literary devices that function primarily in plot development, prompting circumstances that contribute to the formal plot structure of the romance novels.⁴⁹

*Acts of Thomas*⁵⁰

The *Acts of Thomas* is a Christian, apocryphal tale of the apostolic ministry of Judas Thomas – the supposed twin brother of Jesus – in India. Written in the beginning of the third century, the *Acts of Thomas* is structured around thirteen “acts” (i.e., miracles, conversion stories, wonder deeds, etc.) including the apostle’s martyrdom, though the last six “acts” take place in the court of an Indian king named Misdaeus. Within these thirteen acts, there are three dream narratives.

The dream of Thomas (Acts Thom. 29). This dream comes at the end of the second episode (17-29). The apostle Thomas is fasting because the following day is the Lord’s day (ἡ κυριακή). The dream report is then given as follows:

⁴⁹Dreams in other Greek romance novels include Xenophon of Ephesus, *Anthia* 1.12.4; 2.8.2; 5.8.5-9; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 1.3.3-5; 2.23.4-5; 4.1.5-8; 7.12.4; 7.14.2, 5-6; Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 1.18.2-5; 2.16.1-2; 3.11.4-12.1; 4.8.4; 4.16.7; 5.22.1-4; 9.25.1; 10.3.1-2.

⁵⁰Translations of *Acts of Thomas* are mine or modified translation of Drijvers, “The Acts of Thomas”, in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; 2 vols.; Rev. ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 2:322-411. For introductory matters, see Drijvers, “The Acts of Thomas,” 322-339; and A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (2d rev. ed.; NovTSup 108; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1-15.

Now as night came and he was sleeping, the Lord came and stood at his head and said (τῆς δὲ νυκτος ἐπιούσης καὶ καθεύδοντος αὐτοῦ ἐλθὼν ὁ κύριος ἔστη πρὸς τῆ κεφαλῇ αὐτοῦ λέγων), “Thomas, get up at dawn and bless all them; and after the prayer and service depart down the eastern road two miles, and there I will exhibit by you my glory. For because of you departing, many will take refuge in me, and you will put to shame the nature and power of the enemy.” And getting up from his sleep he spoke to the believers who were with him.

Though a *dream terminology* is lacking, the phenomenon is clearly a dream. The dream report begins (*scene-setting*) by noting the activity of sleep and ends (*reaction*) with the depiction of waking from sleep. Also, the *dream proper* has the description of the dream figure “standing at his head,” which is a formal feature sometimes present in a visitant dream report. The dream figure is “the Lord” (Christ) who commands Thomas to travel a specific route so that Christ’s glory will be manifested. On the road, Thomas will discover a man killed by his son and raise him from the dead (30-38). Thus, on the one hand, the dream is a familiar command dream, giving a divine directive to the apostle. But on the other hand, the dream also moves the narrative plot, prompting action that leads to the next miraculous “act” of the apostle (30-41) and demonstrations of the Lord’s glory. Thus, the reader anticipates this next display of Christ’s power.

The dream of Charisius (Acts Thom. 91). This dream is part of the larger story that leads to Thomas’s martyrdom. A noble woman named Mygdonia, who is the wife of the king’s brother, hears the gospel as proclaimed by Thomas (87-88). In response to it, she becomes a believer and commits to chastity. This

commitment leads to a situation in which she will not eat nor sleep with her husband Charisius. As Charisius is sleeping in another bed, he has a dream:

And when he arose from his sleep, he said, “My lady Mygdonia, listen to the dream that appeared to me (τοῦ ὄνειρου τοῦ ὀφθέντος μοι). I saw myself reclining near king Misdaeus, and a full table was set before us. And I saw an eagle coming down from heaven and carry off from before me and the king two partridges, which it took away to its nest. And it again came to us and hovered over us. And the king commanded that a bow be brought to him. And the eagle again carried off from before us a pigeon and a dove. The king shot an arrow at it, and it passed through it from one side to the other. But the arrow did not harm it, and being uninjured it flew to its nest. And having awakened from sleep I am terrified and deeply troubled (καὶ δυππισθεὶς ἐγὼ ἔμφοβός εἰμι καὶ περίλυπος), because I had tasted of the partridge but it did not allow me to put any more [of it] in my mouth.” And Mygdonia said to him, “Your dream is good, for you eat partridges every day, but perhaps that eagle has not tasted a partridge until now.”

This symbolic dream is a creative allegory of the subsequent narrative. A. F. J. Klijn notes that the eagle is often identified with God or Christ.⁵¹ Christ is the pierced – but not injured – eagle who takes for himself two partridges, a pigeon, and a dove. The partridge that Charisius tastes but does not consume is his wife Mygdonia, who has been converted. The other partridge is presumably the king’s wife Tertia, who will also be converted (134-138). The pigeon and the dove are the king’s son Vizan and his wife Mnesara respectively, who will also become believers (139-158). Thus, the dream foreshadows the plot development.

The dream of Mnesara (Acts Thom. 154-155). Vazan, the king’s son, has become a believer and is visiting the apostle Thomas in prison. He is requesting that the apostle come to his house and heal his wife Mnesara. Thomas agrees

⁵¹Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, 170.

and tells Vazan to go ahead and prepare for his coming. When Vazan arrives at the house, he meets his wife Mnesara, who was about to go to the prison. Vazan asks how she was able to get out of bed, and she responds by mentioning a dream that she had:

“This young man laid his hand upon me and raise me up, and I saw a dream (ὄναρ εἶδον) that I should go where the stranger (ὁ ξένος) is residing and I would be completely healthy.” Vazan said to her, “What young man is with you?” And she said, “Do you not see the one on my right hand leading me?”

At that moment Thomas and the other believers enter the house. When Mnesara sees the apostle, she says, “Have you come, our savior from troublesome diseases? You are the one that I saw in the night handing me over to this young man to lead me to the prison.”

The dream is referenced in relation to a young man that only Mnesara can see. The young man has strengthened her enough to get out of bed, which allows her to obey the dream command to go where the stranger is. In dramatic fashion, the dream figure, who delivered Mnesara to the young man in the first place, is revealed to be none other than the apostle himself. The dream is a command dream that facilitates both physical and spiritual healing (156-158).

*Acts of Andrew*⁵²

The *Acts of Andrew* is another Christian apocryphal Acts that narrates the miraculously depicted ministry of the apostle Andrew. Written in the third century, the textual tradition of *Acts of Andrew* is incredibly complex. I have followed MacDonald's "eclectic" text, which is based primarily on Gregory's Latin epitome (GE) but includes sections from some Greek witnesses. The *Acts of Andrew* contains five dream reports.

The dream of Adimantus (Acts Andr. [GE] 13). Adimantus is the sick son of a certain Carpianus, who hears one of Andrew's young disciples preaching in a theater. The crowd in the theater begins to plead for the healing of Adimantus. Andrew, who is present in the theater, tells the *crowd* to "bring him before us, and the Lord Jesus Christ will heal him so that you may believe." The father then goes to the house and tells Adimantus that he will be healed. Adimantus responds by saying, "My dream (*somnium*) has indeed come true, for I saw in a vision this man restoring me to health." The son, then, gets up from the bed and runs to the theater, which amazes the crowd because they have not seen him

⁵²Translations of Acts of Andrew are from Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew* and *The Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* (Text and Translations 33; Christian Apocrypha 1; Atlanta, Ga.; Scholars Press, 1990), or a modification of MacDonald's translation.

Introductory issues are addressed in MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew*, 1-59; and Jean-Mark Prieur, "The Acts of Andrew," in in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; 2 vols.; Rev. ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 2:101-118.

walk in twenty-three years. Thus, the dream encounter itself has provided the healing.

The dream is not a full dream narrative but a reference to a dream and its content. The dream seems to be a visitant dream, in which the dream figure heals Adimantus. The dream figure itself is simply referred to as “this man” (*virum hunc*), but given Andrew’s declaration that Christ would heal him the dream figure mostly likely refers to Christ. This dream is reminiscent of the healing dreams of the Ascepius cult.⁵³

The dream of Andrew (Acts Andr. [GE] 20). This dream of Andrew introduces a new section in the narrative. The dream report is this:

The following night the blessed apostle saw a vision (*visum*) that he narrated to the other believers: “My good friends, listen to my dream (*somnium*). I saw a great mountain raised on high with nothing earthly on it, and it so radiated with light that it seemed to illumine the world. And there standing with me, my beloved brothers, were the apostles Peter and John. Extending his hand to the apostle Peter, John raised him to the mountain’s summit, turned, and asked me to ascend after Peter saying, ‘Andrew, you will drink Peter’s cup.’ With his hands outstretched, he said, ‘Come to me and stretch out your hands to join my hands, and let your head touch mine.’ When I did so, I discovered myself to be shorter than John. ‘Would you like to know,’ he then asked, ‘to what this image you see refers, or who it is who speaks with you?’ ‘I long to know these things,’ I said. ‘I am the word of the cross,’ he said, ‘on which you soon will hang for the name of the one you proclaim.’ He also told me many other things about which I can say nothing now, but which will become apparent when I approach this sacrifice. For now, let all who have received the word of God come together, and let me commend them to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that he may keep them untarnished in his teaching. . . .” When the believers heard these things they wept effusively, slapped their faces, and groaned

⁵³See above, pp. 55-57.

(Haec audientes fratres, flebant valde et cedebant palmis facies suas cum gemitu magno).

This symbolic dream portends the death of Andrew. The presence of Peter and John lend authority and honor to Andrew as well as indicate the kind of death that Andrew will experience. The dream also serves as a revelation of further teaching, though not all the teaching is made public.⁵⁴ The reporting of this symbolic dream is somewhat modified from the conventional dream report. The content of the dream is narrated by the dreamer after the fact. This arrangement allows the reader to learn of the contents at the same time as the narrative audience. Moreover, this modification of the dream report allows the *reaction* to issue from those who hear the narration of the dream instead of the dreamer as is customary.

The dream of Lesbius (Acts Andr. [M 3b-6; L 34] 22). When Andrew enters the Achaean city of Patras performing miracles, the proconsul Lesbius considers Andrew a magician and charlatan and intends to have him arrested and killed. At this point, Lesbius experiences a vision.

At night an angel of the Lord stood over (νυκτὸς δὲ ἐπιστὰς ἄγγελος κυρίου) the proconsul Lesbius with a great manifestation and foreboding threat and said, "What have you suffered from this stranger Andrew such that you wickedly contrived to lay hands on him and defraud the God he preaches? And now, behold, the hand of his Lord is on you, and you will be stricken until you know the truth through him." The angel vanished from him and he was struck dumb.

⁵⁴At least is not made public immediately. MacDonald, *Acts of Andrew*, 269 n. 59, states that Andrew does eventually reveal this teaching in the subsequent narrative as he approaches the cross.

Lesbius then has Andrew brought to him and mournfully repents of his intentions. Andrew heals Lesbius of his punitive ailment and declares, "Since you have believed so greatly in the one who sent me, you will be abundantly filled with knowledge."

It is difficult to discern whether Lesbius experiences a waking vision or a dream vision. The *scene-setting* places the vision at night, which is suggestive of a dream but not determinative. The description of the visitant figure as "standing over" Lesbius is also indicative of a dream vision, as well as the depiction of the dream figure "vanishing." The function of the dream is twofold. First, the dream provides protection for Andrew by intervening and punishing the one who responsible for his imminent threat. Second, the dream provides the means by which Lesbius repents and becomes a believer.

The dream of Sostratus (Acts Andr. [GE] 26). Sostratus is the father of a certain Philopater, whom Andrew had raised from the dead after a shipwreck. As Andrew and others, including Philopater, are walking along, Sostratus comes along and recognizes Andrew, "for he looked just like he had in the dream (*somnium*)."¹ Sostratus then follows the apostle and becomes a believer. The dream is not narrated, nor is it certain what the dream revealed. Sostratus identifies Andrew as the dream figure and consequently receives salvation.

*The dream of Andrew (Acts Andr. [M] 29).*⁵⁵ After healing a household that had been attacked by demons, Andrew has the following dream:

The blessed Andrew then saw a vision (ὄραμα). It seemed (ἔδοξεν) that the savior Christ was standing before him and saying to him, “Andrew, place the Spirit upon Lesbius and give him your grace. And take up your cross and follow me, for tomorrow I will cast you from the world. Hurry to Patras.” And after awaking from sleep (δυσπνισθεὶς), the apostle disclosed to those with him the dream vision (τὴν ὄψιν τοῦ ὀράματος).

The *scene-setting* identifies the dreamer (Andrew) and contains the *dream terminology* ὄραμα. The *dream proper* is a visitant dream introduced by δοκέω. The dream figure is identified as “savior Christ” and a description of the dream figure’s position is mentioned (“standing before him”). The message of the dream is primarily a threefold command: (1) take up cross and follow; (2) sanctify Lesbius (succession?); and (3) go to Patras. The function of the dream, of course, relates Andrew’s martyrdom; thus, the dream predicts his death. Andrew’s *response* is surprisingly incomplete. Andrew does immediately enter Patras (30) and experience martyrdom, but there is no account of Andrew passing on his grace to Lesbius. This is particularly odd, because the *response* is an important element in the dream narrative. If the dreamer is faithful to the dream message, it reveals a positive aspect of the dreamer. But if the dreamer disregards the dream message and does not act accordingly, the dreamer is characterized as foolish and usually reaps negative consequences. In other

⁵⁵As stated by MacDonald, *Acts of Andrew*, 305 n. 88, this dream is not found in Gregory’s Epitome but in a eighth century mss. Thus, “one cannot be certain that this section actually appeared in the ancient AA.”

words, an ancient audience would expect a narration of Andrew placing the Spirit upon Lesbius. This omission may be further evidence that this dream scene was not part of the original Acts of Andrew.

Summary

Dreams in the Christian apocryphal Acts of Apostles are formally equivalent to dreams in Greco-Roman literature. Visitant dreams are predominant (*Acts Thom.* 29; 154-155; *Acts Andr.* 13; 22; 26; 29; cf. *Acts John* 19; 21; *Acts Pet.* 1; 5; 6; 30; 40), though symbolic dreams are not absent (*Acts Thom.* 91; *Acts Andr.* 20). The dream figure of the visitant dreams are usually Christ (*Acts Thom.* 29; *Acts Andr.* 13 [?]; 29; cf. also *Acts Pet.* 1; 5; 30) or the apostles (*Acts Thom.* 154-155; *Acts Andr.* 26; cf. also *Acts John* 19, 21; *Acts Pet.* 6; 40). The functions of the dream in the Acts of Apostles are several and are particularly suited to the nature of this Christian literature. There are command-directive dreams that instruct the apostles to go to specified places so that the gospel can be preached or demonstrated for others (*Acts Thom.* 29; cf. also *Acts John* 18; *Acts Pet.* 1; 5). There are healing dreams (*Acts Thom.* 154-155 [partial]; *Acts Andr.* 13) or dreams that direct the dreamer to an apostle, which results in healing and/or conversion (*Acts Thom.* 154-155; *Acts Andr.* 26; cf. also *Acts John* 19, 21). Dreams also portend an apostle's martyrdom (*Acts Andr.* 20; 29).

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed dream narratives in sample texts of historical, biographical, and fictional Greco-Roman texts; it has been guided by a consideration of the form and function of the dream report. It can be concluded that dreams in these texts function at two levels. First, dreams function within the narrative in two primary ways: to portend the future and to reveal a divine imperative. In portending the future, dreams are connected with several topics: birth (future greatness), future reign (fortune or lose), battle (victory or defeat), and death. Divine imperative dreams also deal with or result in some recurring motifs: healing, protection, establishment of a city or colony, or cultic act. Second, dreams function at a narratological level, contributing to characterization and prompting plot development, including critical narrative moments. This analysis of the form and function of dreams in Greco-Roman literature provides a necessary perspective by which to interpret how an ancient audience would understand the dreams in the Gospel of Matthew.

CHAPTER FIVE

Dreams in the Gospel of Matthew

The previous chapters have described and analyzed the ancient social and literary contexts of dreams in order to construct the beliefs, values, and expectations an ancient audience would bring to a text that narrated dreams. The present chapter intends to read the dreams of the Gospel of Matthew in light of this construct; that is, to understand or “make sense” of the Matthean dreams as an ancient audience would. Matthew's Gospel contains six references to dreams: five in the infancy narrative (1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22) and one in the passion narrative (27:19). Of these six references, only three are presented in what may be considered a dream report: 1:18b-24, 2:13-15, and 2:19-21.

An ancient audience would first read these dreams as part of the larger literary work of Matthew's Gospel: a *bios* of Jesus.¹ Given the literary character of this work and its narrative form, the Matthean dreams will be read in view of the larger Greco-Roman literary context of dreams. This literary analysis will be facilitated by attending to the form and function of Matthew's dreams. Thus, the first major section of this chapter will describe the literary form of the Matthean

¹Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 185-212; Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 59-71.

dreams, demonstrating that they correspond to the conventional form of dream reports found in other Greco-Roman literature. The second major section will interpret the functions of Matthew's dreams, drawing upon the way dreams function in other literature and explaining their specific contribution to Matthew's narrative of Jesus. The chapter will conclude with some perspectives on the significance of dreams for Matthew's overall portrait of Jesus.

The Form of the Matthean Dreams

As stated previously, only three of the six references to dreams in the Gospel of Matthew are dream reports. In analyzing the form of these dreams, interpreters have generally followed one of three approaches.

First, some scholars simply identify the particular, repetitive pattern of Matthew's dreams without any awareness of or comparison with the dream form in other literature. For example, Raymond Brown describes the structure of Matthew's dreams as follows: (1) a genitive absolute clause connecting the dream to the narrative context; (2) appearance of an angel of the Lord; (3) the command of the angel; (4) a reason for the command; and (5) Joseph's obedience to the command.² Brown's description of the structure of Matthew's dreams is not inaccurate, but by not comparing the Matthean dreams with dreams in other

²Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (new updated ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 108. Cf. also Tarcisio Stramare, "I sogni di S. Giuseppe," *CaJos* 19 (1971): 104-22; and Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC 33A; Dallas: Word, 1993), 15. See Robert Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," *Novum Testamentum* 32 (1990): 104-105, for a review of earlier such studies.

literature this approach is deficient in two ways. First, it neglects the subtleties of the compositional pattern that Matthew's dreams exhibit; a comparison with dreams in other literature would highlight this compositional pattern. Second, this approach fails to recognize that dreams are a literary convention in Greco-Roman literature, and that by employing this literary convention Matthew is participating in the literary tradition and practices of his day. Thus, this approach to the form of Matthew's dreams is too isolated from the larger literary context of dreams and so lacks a more comprehensive interpretive framework.

The second approach to the form of Matthew's dreams concludes that the Matthean dreams are modeled upon the dreams found in the Old Testament, particularly the book of Genesis. The most detailed study of this sort is Robert Gnuse's 1990 *Novum Testamentum* article.³ Gnuse argues that the dreams in

³Robert Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," *Novum Testamentum* 32 (1990): 97-120. Cf. also Alfred Wikenhauser, "Die Traumgesichte des Neuen Testaments in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht," in *Pisciculi: Studien zur Religion und Kultur des Altertums* (ed. F. J. Dölger; Antike und Christentum 1; Münster: Aschendorff, 1939), 321; and George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt. 1-2* (AnBib 63; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 185-7, 223-5.

The influence of Gnuse's study can be seen in Raymond Brown's endorsement of his conclusions in the supplement material in the new updated version of his *The Birth of the Messiah*, 599. Cf. also, Marco Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium: Einige Beobachtungen," *JAC* 41 (1998): 31, who accepts Gnuse's study – though it does not appear to bear upon his investigation; and John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 97 n. 50.

Matthew's infancy narrative share "deep structural similarities"⁴ with the Elohist dreams that are found in Genesis, which indicates the formal dependence of Matthean dreams upon the Elohist dreams. In other words, Gnuse claims that the Matthean dreams are literary imitations of dreams in sections of Genesis that modern scholars have identified as "Elohist." As shown in Chapter 3, the literary imitation of dreams in Greco-Roman literature existed; but given the formal, conventional pattern of dream reports, it is difficult to demonstrate a dream narrative as an imitation of another literary dream. The following is a response to Gnuse, showing that he does not convincingly demonstrate Matthew's dependence upon the Elohist dreams.

First, Gnuse's claim that Matthew's dreams share "deep structural similarities" with the Elohist dreams is not sufficiently demonstrated. Gnuse supports this claim with five points. (1) He compares the introductory formal features of the Elohist dreams (Gen 20:3-8 [Abimelech]; 28:12-16 [Jacob]; 31:10-13 [Jacob]; 31:24 [Laban]; and 46:2-4 [Jacob/Israel]) and the Matthew dreams reports.⁵ The Elohist features are theophany, recipient, dream reference, and time; the Matthew features are theophany, dream reference, recipient, and place. Gnuse notes the switching of recipient and dream reference and the replacement of time with place, but such differences do not lead him to question the "deep similarities" between the two dream formats. Moreover, I would note that this is

⁴Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," 107.

⁵Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," 112.

the common pattern of dream reports in Greco-Roman literature when an introductory $\delta\omicron\kappa\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ is not used. (2) Gnuse notes that “Matthean dream reports begin with the particle, “behold,” which is reminiscent of the introductory “behold” (*hennēh*) in the Genesis dreams that initiate the auditory message.”⁶ Once again, Gnuse acknowledges the different function of “behold” in the two dream formats – introducing the entire dream report in Matthew but only the dream message in Genesis – but this difference is simply seen as “incidental.” It is important to note that only the dream of Gen 20:3 has the term “behold;” thus, the reference to “Genesis dreams” in the above quote is somewhat misleading. (3) Gnuse argues that “[b]oth the Genesis and the Matthean dreams introduce the divine message with vocabulary designed to emphasize the auditory nature of the dream theophany: hebrew *wayyōmer* and greek *λέγων*.”⁷ A review of the dream reports analyzed in Chapter 4 will show that the message of visitant dreams is also introduced with verbs of “saying;” the dreams of Genesis and Matthew are not providing more emphasis than other dreams in other literature.⁸

⁶Gnuse, “Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives,” 112.

⁷Gnuse, “Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives,” 112.

⁸This claim raises a secondary problem with Gnuse’s study. He argues that Matthew modeled his dreams upon the *Hebrew* text of Genesis. The Septuagint tradition does not have *λέγων* but *εἶπεν* (Gen 20:3; 28:12; 31:11; 31:24) or *εἶπών* (Gen 46:2). Moreover, the Septuagint does not have Matthew’s dream terminology (*ὄναρ*). Scholarship on Matthew’s form of the Old Testament is still debated, but most would accord a role to the Septuagint in Matthew’s use of the Jewish Scriptures. Gnuse does not seem to be aware of this issue. For Matthew’s use and form of the Old Testament, see Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel*

(4) Gnuse claims that the dream messages of Matthew, which are assurance and command, fall within the range of the Genesis dream messages, which are assurance, promise, warning, and command.⁹ Once again, the dream reports surveyed in Chapter 4 reveal that this “range” of dream messages is not limited to dreams in Genesis and Matthew; these are common motifs in dream reports of Greco-Roman literature. (5) Gnuse notes that “[f]ormal termination concludes both the Genesis and Matthean dream reports: in Genesis the dream recipient is said to have awakened, whereas in Matthew Joseph arose from sleep.”¹⁰ The differences are noted by Gnuse, but these “formal terminations” are common features found in Greco-Roman dream reports. Thus, Gnuse’s contention that the Matthean dream reports share “deep structural similarities” with the Genesis dreams is untenable. The acknowledged differences along with the conventional pattern of dream reports in the larger Greco-Roman literary context cumulatively undermine his argument that the Matthean dreams represent a literary mimesis of the Genesis dreams.

A second problem with Gnuse’s argument is the diversity of the Genesis dream accounts. While the dream reports in Matthew are admittedly terse and

for a New People: Studies in Matthew (Louisville, Ky.; Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 353-358; and R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.; InterVarsity Press, 1989), 172-176; and Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 19.

⁹Gnuse, “Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives,” 112.

¹⁰Gnuse, “Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives,” 113.

repetitive, the Genesis dreams are fairly diverse and more elaborate. For instance, some dreams – like Matthew’s – are visitant dreams that report a dream figure’s message (Gen 20:3-8; 31:24; 46:2-4), while other dreams combine a symbolic dream with a visitant or auditory dream (Gen 28:12-16; 31:10-13). Also, several of the dreams in Genesis include a dialogue between the dream figure and the dreamer (20:3-8; 31:10-13; 46:2-6), unlike the monologue of the Matthean dreams. And should not the symbolic dreams in the Joseph narrative of Genesis be included in this analysis? If Matthew is imitating dreams in Genesis, can we expect him to select dreams along the lines of modern source-critical theories? In the end, the dream reports in Genesis, including the so-called Elohist tradition, are too diverse to claim that Matthew is imitating “the dreams” in Genesis. An argument for literary mimesis would be more convincing if one could identify a single Genesis dream which Matthew imitated.¹¹

Thirdly, Gnuse does introduce the possibility of Matthew being “influenced” by Greco-Roman dream reports; he even provides John Hanson’s form critical study.¹² He concludes, however, that “Greek dreams are far more

¹¹Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 223-224 and 294-297, actually sets forth such an argument. In his reconstruction of the sources of Matt 1 – 2, Soares Prabhu argues that the dream of Matt 2:13-15 is “probably the earliest in origin” (295) and is modeled upon Gen 46:2-4 (LXX). The dreams of Matt 2:19-23 and 1:18-25 respectively were in turn modeled upon Matt 2:13-15. In terms of Matt 2:13-15 being an imitation of Gen 46:2-4, the argument is open to the same weaknesses as those of Gnuse’s arguments.

¹²John S. Hanson, “Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 23.2: 1395-1427.

complex [than Biblical dreams], especially in terms of portraying the mental processes and attitudes of the dreamer.”¹³ Unfortunately, Gnuse does not offer any examples of these “complex” dream reports, nor does he unpack his description of “complex.” His conclusion is questionable on two grounds. First, the initial Matthean dream narrative (1:18-25) contains two features of the Greco-Roman dream report as described by Hanson:¹⁴ (1) character sketch of the dreamer (Joseph is described as “righteous” [δικαίος]); and (2) the mental state of the dreamer (Joseph was “reflecting upon these things” [ταῦτα . . . ἐνθυμηθέντος]).¹⁵ On the other hand, none of the Elohist dreams have these formal features. In this case, the Greco-Roman dream reports provide a closer formal parallel than the biblical material. Second, dreams in Greco-Roman epics and dramas do tend to be highly dramatic and sometimes include a psychological dimension, which may be what Gnuse intends by the word “complex.” But a review of the dream reports in Chapter 4—drawn from historical, biographical, and fictional texts—will illustrate a number of dream reports that rival the Matthean dreams in terseness and simplicity. Gnuse

¹³Gnuse, “Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives,” 103.

¹⁴Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1406-7.

¹⁵The form of Matthew’s dreams will be given fuller attention below.

ultimately presents an unnecessary dichotomy and uninformed caricature of the differences between Greco-Roman and Ancient Near Eastern dream reports.¹⁶

Thus, whereas the first approach to the form of Matthew's dreams is too isolated from the larger literary context of dreams, the second approach is too narrow in its comparative material (i.e., Old Testament).¹⁷ A third approach that takes into account Matthew's larger Greco-Roman literary context is necessary.

This third approach has been *recognized* by others but has not been fully employed. For example, Davies and Allison state the following in their commentary on Matthew:

Dreams were also of great importance in the Graeco-Roman world, and Matthew's story of Joseph can be profitably compared with the typical dream patterns found in the literature that that world produced. This is particularly true because the standard OT pattern is to state 'X dreams a dream' and then to give the contents only after the event, after the dreamer awakes; while in the Graeco-Roman materials, on the other hand, the

¹⁶As provided in Chapter 3, the observations of Frances Flannery-Daily and John Hanson bear repeating here. In her study of dreams in Ancient Near Eastern, Greek and Roman, and Hellenistic Jewish literature, Frances Flannery-Daily discovers a "surprisingly standardized [pattern] across many cultures for millennia" ("Standing at the Head of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity" [Ph.D. diss., The University of Iowa, 2000], 1, see chs. 1-2); and Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1396: "Especially in formal, literary ways, the fundamental character of dream-vision reports does not significantly change from the Homeric poets to the end of late antiquity. Further, there are striking parallels between dream-vision materials of the Hellenistic and Roman periods and those of earlier cultures such as Assyria, Egypt, and Israel."

¹⁷The study of Matthew's dreams by Frances Flannery-Daily, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers: A Study of Dreams in Antiquity," can also be placed in the second approach, for she limits her comparative material to Jewish texts of Second Temple Judaism. See Chapter One for a discussion of this work.

contents of a dream are usually given concurrently with the dreaming, that is, given as the dream takes place.¹⁸

Except for the detail of Joseph “reflecting upon these things” in 1:20,¹⁹ the exegesis of Davies and Allison is not informed by the comparison that they suggest. Another example of the third approach is John Hanson, whose form critical analysis is adopted by this study. Hanson comments that Matthew’s dreams “conform completely to formal expectations” when compared with the formal pattern of dreams in Greco-Roman literature.²⁰ He, however, does not demonstrate nor analyze how the Mattheans dreams indeed correspond to Greco-Roman dream narratives. The following seeks to fill this form critical gap in the study of Matthew’s dreams, demonstrating that the form of the dream narrative in Matthew corresponds to the form of dream reports in Greco-Roman literature.

¹⁸W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 1:207. Though the first part of this statement – comparing Matthew’s dreams to those in the Greco-Roman world – is warranted, the second part of the quote is mistaken. Only dreams of Joseph and Daniel follow the pattern described by Davies and Allison, but other OT dreams follow the pattern set forth by Hanson (cf. Gen 20:3-8; 28:10-21; 31-10-13; 31:24; 46:1-5; Num 22:20-21; Judg 7.13-14; 1 Kings 3:4-15). Davies and Allison show no awareness of Gnuse’s study.

¹⁹Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:206.

²⁰Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1421.

The Form of Matthew 1:18b-25

Though the Gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogy of Jesus, it could be said that the narrative proper opens with a dream report. This dream narrative is as follows:

When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they had come together (συνελθεῖν αὐτούς), she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. Now her husband Joseph, being righteous (δίκαιος) and not wanting to publicly disgrace her (αὐτήν δειγματίσαι), planned to divorce her privately. And after he reflected upon these things (ταῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ ἐνθυμηθέντος), behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream (ἄγγελος κυρίου κατ' ὄναρ ἐφάνη αὐτῷ) and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the [child] conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this has taken place so that what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: 'Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel' (which is translated, 'God is with us')." Now when Joseph awoke from sleep (ἐγερθεὶς . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου), he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife. And he did not know (ἐγίνωσκεν) her until she had borne a son, and he named him Jesus."

Given the introductory nature of this dream report, the *scene-setting* includes the circumstances leading up to the dream.²¹ There are two formal features of the *scene-setting* that are present in this initial Matthean dream. First, the identity of the dreamer (Joseph) is indicated along with a sketch of his character (righteous). Other Greco-Roman dream reports that include a comment about the dreamer's

²¹For a similar expansion of the *scene-setting*, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.12-14; Josephus, *War* 2.114-116; Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3.

character include the following.²² Strabo recounts the dream of a certain Aristarcha, whom he identifies as “one of the most honorable of women” (τῶν ἐντίμων σφόδρα γυναικῶν).²³ In narrating the dream of the Egyptian king Sabaco, Diodorus of Sicily comments that he “in piety and uprightness far surpassed his predecessors (εὐσεβείᾳ δὲ καὶ χρηστότητι πολὺ διαφέρων τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ).”²⁴ The description of character could also be negative. Herodotus describes the dreamer Cambyses as mad (μαίνομαι), a character flaw that leads to jealousy (φθόνος) of his brother Smerdis.²⁵ Some dream reports may not use a specific term or phrase to describe the character of the dreamer, but the *scene-setting* includes circumstances that reveal the dreamer’s character.²⁶ Also, as Hanson notes, the larger context of histories and biographies “often makes this feature unnecessary.”²⁷ The second feature of the *scene-setting* in Matthew’s first dream narrative is the description of the mental state of the dreamer (“reflecting upon these things” (ταῦτα . . . ἐνθυμηθέντος)). Dream reports surveyed in the previous chapter that include this feature are the following: Sethos is

²²It should be noted that the vision report in Acts 10:1-8 includes a description of Cornelius’s character as “pious and one who fears God” (εὐσεβὴς καὶ φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν).

²³Strabo, *Geogr.* 4.1.4.

²⁴Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 1.65.2 (Oldfather, LCL); cf. 1.65.4.

²⁵Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.30.

²⁶For example, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.34 and Josephus, *War* 2.114.116.

²⁷Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1406, n. 44.

“lamenting” (ὀλοφυρόμενον);²⁸ Xerxes is “giving serious counsel” (βουλὴν διδοὺς πάγχυ) to the advice of Artabanus;²⁹ Callirhoe is “considering these things” (ταῦτα λογιζομένη) in one dream scene³⁰ and “lamenting despondently” (δυρομένη . . . ἀθύμως) in another;³¹ Daphnes is “talking out of his tears and pain” (λέγοντα . . . ἐκ τῶν δακρύων καὶ τῆς λύπης);³² and Dionysophanes has given “much thought” (φροντίδα πολλήν).³³ Hanson also observes that the mental state of the dreamer could also include prayer,³⁴ a feature common in Jewish dream reports.³⁵

²⁸Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.141.

²⁹Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.12-14.

³⁰Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.9.1-6.

³¹Chariton, *Chaer.* 5.5.5-7.

³²Longus, *Daphn.* 2.23.1 – 24.1.

³³Longus, *Daphn.* 4.34.1-3.

³⁴Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1407, references Acts 22:17 and Homer, *Od.* 2.261; cf. also *Acts Pet.* 3.1 Other sources cited by Hanson that include the mental state of the dreamer are Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.34; Plutarch, *Eum.* 6.4; *Brut.* 36.4; and Josephus, *Ant.* 11.334. Cf. also Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.57.4; Plutarch, *Per.* 13.8; 2 *En.* 1:3; *Acts John* 19.

The entirety of this evidence refutes Craig Keener’s statement that “the mention of Joseph’s anxiety probably has more to do with the story line than with the frequency of citing mental states when relating dreams” (*Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999], 94 n. 63). All these references to the “mental states” of the dreamers relate to their respective story lines.

³⁵Cf. Dan 9:21; 4 *Ezra* 3:1-3; 5:121-22; 6:35-37; 1 *En.* 13:7; 2 *Bar.* 35:1ff; 2 *En.* 69:4; 71:24-25; Josephus, *Ant.* 11.326; *L.A.B* 42:2-3.

The *dream terminology* found in the first Matthean dream report is also found in all the references to dreams in Matthew's Gospel: κατ' ὄναρ. BDAG notes that the phrase κατ' ὄναρ first appears in literature around the turn of the first century.³⁶ The phrase also becomes common in inscriptions. Gil Renberg has brought together the largest collection of inscriptions that deal with dreams and waking visions, and the phrase κατ' ὄναρ has the largest representation in the Greek inscriptions.³⁷

The *dream proper* is a visitant dream with the dream figure identified as "an angel of the Lord" (ἄγγελος κυρίου). The ἄγγελος κυρίου reflects the Jewish heritage and symbolic world that informs Matthew's story in particular and the Christian movement in general. Matthew's ἄγγελος κυρίου is not the same as the Old Testament designation for God but is part of the developing angelology of Middle Judaism, particularly the convention of angels appearing in dreams.³⁸ It is interesting to note, however, that the well-known dream in Homer's *Iliad* that deceives Agamemon is referred to as the ἄγγελος Διός

³⁶BDAG, 710a. The entry includes references to Strabo 4.1.4, Anth. Pal. 11.263.1, Diog. L. 10.32, and Eunap. 55 as instances of its use.

³⁷Gil H. Renberg, "Commanded By the Gods': An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2003), appendix I. See also, Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 14-21, for a discussion of κατ' ὄναρ.

³⁸Flannery-Dailey, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers," 415-416. Cf. also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:206.

("angel/messenger of Zeus").³⁹ Oftentimes in a visitant dream report the position of the dream figure is stated in relation to the dreamer,⁴⁰ and sometimes a description of the dream figure is given.⁴¹ Matthew's dream narrative lacks both these features, but this is not uncommon.⁴² The message of the dream figure is given in direct discourse, giving encouragement, issuing a command, and providing an explanation for the command.

At this point in the dream report, an interpretative issue is raised: Is the so-called formula or fulfillment quotation of vv. 22-23 part of the angel's message or a narrative aside?⁴³ Most interpreters read the formula quotation as an

³⁹Homer, *Il.* 2.25.

⁴⁰Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.139; 2.141; Josephus, *War* 2.114; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 7.68.3; Acts 16:9; 23:11; 27:23; Plutarch, *Arist.* 19.2; Soranus, *Vit. Hipp.* 4.7; Chariton, *Chaer.* 3.7.4; 6.2.2; Longus, *Daphn.* 3.27.1–28.1; Acts *Thom.* 29; Acts *Andr* 22; 29; Acts *John* 19.

⁴¹Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.56; 7.12; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.83; Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.34; Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.1.2; 2.9.1-6; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.23.1–24.1; *L.A.B.* 9.10.

⁴²Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.30; Acts 18:9; Plutarch, *Them.* 30.1-3; *Arist.* 11.5; *Per.* 13.8; *Cor.* 24; Suetonius, *Aug.* 91.2; *Tib.* 74; *Galb.* 4.3; 18.2; Diogenes Laertius 1.117; *Life of Aesop* 7; Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.3.5; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.26.5; Acts *Pet* 1; 30; 1QapGen XXI, 8; *L.A.B.* 23.2-4a; 28.4a.

⁴³For a brief note that weighs the options, see Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 1:211, though they opt for the formula quotation as an "editorial remark(s)." Consider also Margaret Davies, *Matthew* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 33: "Either the angel or the narrator goes on to interpret the conception as a fulfillment of a scriptural prophecy from God" (emphasis added).

intrusion into the dream report⁴⁴ and so interpret it as a narrative aside, though that terminology is not necessarily used.⁴⁵ As intrusive as narrative asides may be, they were common in ancient literature.⁴⁶ Moreover, Matthew is not alone in inserting a narrator's comment into a dream report. Herodotus has two dream reports that contain narrative asides.⁴⁷ In each case, the dreamer experiences a dream about his son. The narrative asides provide the reader with needed information about the dreamer's son, so that the meaning or implication of the

⁴⁴Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1421, states, "The report would read smoothly if these two verses were omitted." A similar sentiment is expressed by Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 144: "Occurring where it does, the citation in 1:22-23 is intrusive in the flow of the narrative. . . . [Verses] 22-23 is the real continuation of the angelic appearance in 20-21 and that 22-23 is obviously an insertion."

⁴⁵Graham Stanton includes the formula quotation of 1:22-23 in the list of "theological 'asides' or comments by the evangelist" ("Matthew," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* [ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 205, 206). See also Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 144 ("intrusive in the flow of the narrative" . . . "obviously an insertion"); Krister Stendahl, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Matthew 1–2," in *The Interpretation of Matthew* (IRT 3; ed. G. Stanton; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 60 ("Matthew's interpretive comment"); Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:211 ("editorial remark(s)"); Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (JSOTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 154 ("direct authorial comment"); Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (2d ed., rev. and enl.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 44 ("private comments to the reader"); Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 20 ("an aside by the evangelist"); and Pierre Bonnard, *L'évangile selon Matthieu* (CNT 1; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2002), 21 ("le commentaire de Mat.").

⁴⁶For a study of narrative asides in ancient literature, see Steven M. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 72; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1992), 40-96.

⁴⁷Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.34 and 1.209.

dream can be better understood. Plutarch provides a narrative aside in a dream report concerning Alexander's building of Alexandria.⁴⁸ The dream figure directs Alexander to build his city on the island of Pharos; the narrative aside explains to the reader that at the time of Alexander's dream Pharos was an island, though presently it had been connected to the mainland by a causeway. Longus also provides narrative asides in two of his dream reports.⁴⁹ The first narrative aside informs the reader that the dream figures (Nymphs) were the same Nymphs from earlier in the story whom the dreamer has seen painted on the wall of a cave, where the dreamer had discovered his infant child. Accordingly, it connects the dream scene, which concerns instructions on the rearing of the child, with the previous plot segment. The second narrative aside simply introduces the name of the dreamer, who had been active in the narrative but whose name had not yet been given. Thus, Matthew's insertion of a narrative aside into a dream report is not unique when compared to other dream accounts in Greco-Roman literature, and so becomes less disruptive than interpreters have suggested. It provides a commentary on the significance of the events taking place in relation to the dream. More significantly, the content of this narrative aside is commonly related to dreams in antiquity. This aspect of the formula quotation will be discussed in the next section.

⁴⁸Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3.

⁴⁹Longus, *Daphn.* 1.2.1–8.2 and 1.26.5–28.1.

Instead of a narrative aside, however, the formula quotation of Matt 1:22-23 can be read as part of the angel's message.⁵⁰ First, there are other places in Matthew where the formula quotation is part of a character's speech (2:5-6; 26:56), so to have the formula quotation spoken by the angel is not exceptional. Secondly, J. C. Fenton has observed that where the formula quotation is part of a character's speech it contains a verb in the perfect mood (2:5, γέγραπται; 26:56, γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῆ), whereas the other formula quotations simply have ἵνα πληρωθῆ (2:17; 2:23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 27:9 [ἐπληρώθη]).⁵¹ The formula quotation in 1:22 also has a perfect verb (γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῆ), which parallels the two instances where the character's speech includes the formula quotation. And thirdly, another factor that suggests that the angel's speech includes the formula quotation is a comparison with the two other dream references with formula quotations in Matthew 2. In 2:13-15 and 2:22-23, Matthew refers to dreams that prompt certain actions; these actions in turn fulfill prophecy, which

⁵⁰For those few interpreters who read the formula quotation as part of the angel's speech, see J. C. Fenton, "Matthew and the Divinity of Jesus: Three Questions Concerning Matthew 1:20-23," in *Papers on the Gospels* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; vol. 2 of *Studia Biblica 1978: Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies*; JSNTSup 2; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1980), 79-80; and Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 1; 2d ed.; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1905), 78, who notes Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.23.1 and Photius, *Ad Amphilochium Quaestio XXV* (PG 101:190) as reading the formula quotation as a continuation of the angel's message.

It is interesting to note the even if one reads the quotation formula as part of the angel's message, vs. 23 may still contains a narrative aside: ὁ ἔστιν μεθερμηνεύμενον μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός ("which is translated 'God with us'").

⁵¹Fenton, "Matthew and the Divinity of Jesus: Three Questions Concerning Matthew 1:20-23," 79-80.

is stated in a formula quotation at the conclusion of the dream report or reference. The formula quotation in Matthew 1:22-23, however, does not conclude the dream report but is included within it, which may suggest that it is intended to be read as a part of the angel's speech. There are other aspects of the dream report in Matt 1:18b-25 that may support reading the formula quotation as a continuation of the angel's message, but they will be discussed in the next section.

The final feature of this dream narrative is Joseph's *reaction* and *response*. Joseph's *reaction* is not so much a mental or emotional response but simply the narrator's mentioning his "awakening from sleep" (ἐγερθεὶς . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου).⁵² Joseph *responds* by obeying the angel's command, taking Mary as his wife and naming the child Jesus. The *response* feature of a dream report can either (1) note the immediate response of the dreamer⁵³ or (2) provide an

⁵²For other dream reports that note the dreamer waking up, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.34; 1.209; Josephus, *Ant.* 11:328; Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 17.103.7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 5.54.2; 7.68.3-4; Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3; Luc. 12.1-2; *Life of Aesop* 9; Acts 16:6-12 [Codex Bezae]; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.23.1 – 24.1; *Acts Thom.* 29; *Acts Thom.* 91; *Acts Andr.* [M] 29; L.A.B. 23.2-4a; Ezek. Trag. 85-86.

⁵³See esp. Appian *Bell. civ.* 1.12.105; *Hist. rom.* 8.20.136; Josephus, *Ant.* 11:328; Acts 16:6-10; Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3; Suetonius, *Aug.* 91.2; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.26.5 – 28.1; 4.34.1-3; *Acts Pet.* 5; 30. Cf. also Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.141; 3.30; 6.118; Appian *Hist. rom.* 8.1.1; Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 17.103.7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ant. rom.* 1.56.5; 1.57.4 [2]; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.14; Acts 18:9-11; Plutarch, *Them.* 30.1-3; Suetonius, *Jul.* 7.2 – 8.1; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.34; Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.3.5; 6.2.2; *Acts Thom.* 29; 154-155; *Acts John* 18.

extended narrative of how the dream or dream-command was fulfilled.⁵⁴ The Matthean dream report follows the pattern of the first type: Joseph is portrayed as responding immediately to the dream. Many interpreters make special mention of Joseph's obedient response, suggesting that his response is exceptional and indicative of his "righteousness" (1:19).⁵⁵ Interpretations of Joseph's obedience, however, must be made in light of the conventional form of dream reports in the Greco-Roman literature. Such obedience is a typical feature of the dream report and would be expected by an ancient audience.⁵⁶ It is significant, though, that Matthew does describe Joseph's response in the same terms as the dream message,⁵⁷ and perhaps the response of Joseph is emphasized

⁵⁴Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.34; 1.107-108; 3.124; Plutarch, *Them.* 26.2-4; *Caes.* 63.5-7; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.23.1 – 24.1; 3.27.1 – 28.1; *Acts Thom.* 91; *Acts Andr.* [GE] 20.

⁵⁵See especially, Gnuse, "Dream Genre in the Matthean Infancy Narratives," 113; Flannery-Dailey, "Standing at the Head of Dreamers," 406; and Magda Motté, "'Mann des Glaubens': Die Gestalt Jesophs nach dem Neuen Testament," *BibLeb* 11 (1970), 176-189. See also, Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 25; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:218-219; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 103; Bonnard, *L'évangile selon Matthieu*, 22.

⁵⁶Cf. the references in footnote 53.

⁵⁷Note terminology of the angel's message-command (παραλαβεῖν Μαρίαν τὴν γυναῖκα σου and καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν) is repeated in describing Joseph's response (παρέλαβεν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ and ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν).

It should also be noted that, if Joseph's obedient response is being emphasized, it may also be underscored by his going *beyond* what the dream message dictates. In addition to the specifics of the dream command, Joseph's

in this manner. But this emphasis simply exploits what is already present in the form of the dream report.

The dream of Matt 1:18b-25 is the most detailed dream narrative in Matthew's Gospel. The two subsequent dream reports in Matthew 2 are not only more terse but also repeat many of the features found in the initial dream report, such as dream terminology, type of dream, dream figure, and reaction/response. For this reason, the analysis of the form of these two dream reports is minimal.

The Form of Matthew 2:13-15

Now after they had departed, an angel of the Lord (ἄγγελος κυρίου) appeared to Joseph in a dream (φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ) and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he woke up (ἐγερθεὶς) and took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called by son."

The *scene-setting* is minimal and simply consists of a genitive absolute that connects the dream report with the previous circumstances. Like the dream report in 1:18b-25 Joseph is the dreamer, the dream is a visitant dream, and the dream figure is identified as "an angel of the Lord" (ἄγγελος κυρίου). The message is a command given in direct discourse along with a basis for the

response also includes the abstinence of sexual relations with Mary until after the child is born (vs. 24). See also Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.4 and Diogenes Laertius 3.1-2 for examples of husbands abstaining from sexual relations because of the knowledge or suspicion that their wives' pregnancy was of divine origin.

command. Joseph is portrayed as “waking up” and *responding* to the dream figure’s message. A formula quotation is given at the end of the dream report, connecting the consequences of the dream with the fulfillment of prophecy.

The Form of Matthew 2:19-20

When Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream (ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ’ ὄναρ) to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” And he woke up (ἐγερθεὶς) and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.

The *scene-setting* feature of this dream narrative provides a temporal reference (death of Herod), the identification of the dreamer (Joseph), and the place of the dream (Egypt). Like the previous dream reports, the *dream proper* is a visitant dream with the dream figure identified as “an angel of the Lord” (ἄγγελος κυρίου). The dream message is narrated in direct discourse and represents a command. Once again, Joseph is described as “waking up” and promptly following the directive of the message.

Summary

The dream reports of the Gospel of Matthew represent a conventional, compositional pattern that an ancient audience would find formally comparable to other dream reports in Greco-Roman literature. There is a script to how dreams are narrated in ancient literature, and the Matthean dreams conform to this literary practice. It should be noted, however, that the dream reports of

Matthew are repetitive and lack variation from one another. The dream of 1:18b-25 is the first and most elaborate; the other two dream reports (2:13-15; 2:19-20) not only repeat the type of dream (visitant) but also replicate many of the same features (dream terminology, dream figure, dream response). Other ancient narratives show more diversity in their narration of dreams. Thus, while Matthew reflects a certain amount of uniformity in the way he narrates dreams, the dream reports themselves reflect a conventional form found in Greco-Roman literature; and an ancient audience would bring to Matthew's dream narratives the same literary expectations and values as the dreams found in contemporary literature. It should also be emphasized there is nothing peculiarly biblical or Jewish about the *form* of these dreams,⁵⁸ as if Matthew was imitating the dream reports of the Jewish scriptures or a particular dream in Jewish tradition (Moses). If anything, Matthew imitates his own dream report, given the repetitive nature of his dreams.

Having analyzed the compositional pattern of Matthew's dreams, I now turn to a study of the functions of the Matthean dreams.

The Functions of the Matthean Dreams and Additional Observations

Not only does the narrative form of the Matthean dreams correspond to the compositional form of other dreams in Greco-Roman literature, but the

⁵⁸The content of Matthew's dream reports are a different matter and unmistakably reveal a Jewish worldview and heritage (e.g., "angel of the Lord" and prophecies from Jewish Scripture, as well as the larger narrative context of Matthew's narrative).

literary functions of the Matthean dreams also comport to the expectations of an ancient audience. The following describes how the dreams of Matthew function both in the larger matrix of literary dreams and the particular narrative of Matthew's story of Jesus.

The Dream of Matthew 1:18b-25

The function of the initial Matthean dream (1:18b-25) should first be considered in light of other birth stories and the tradition of encomiastic rhetoric. It was noted in Chapter three that dreams are a conventional motif for developing the birth *topos* in encomium. After the introductory proem, an encomium would begin with a discussion about a person's origin, which may then be followed by the topic of birth.⁵⁹ Hermogenes describes these *topoi* in the following way:

Encomiastic topics are (the subject's) nationality (ἔθνος), such as Greek, city (πόλις), such as Athenian, family (γένος), such as Alcmaeonid. You will mention also any marvelous occurrences at birth (περὶ τὴν γένεσιν), for example from dreams (ὄνειράτων) or signs (συμβόλων) or things like that.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Some rhetors do not include the birth *topos*. Theon refers to the origin *topos* as "good birth" (εὐγένεια ἀγαθόν) but states that this *topos* will be developed "either from the goodness of (a man's) city and nationality (ἔθνος) and constitution (πολιτείας), or from ancestors (γονέων) and other relatives" (Theon, *Progym.* 9.15-17 [mod. trans. Kennedy, 50; text Butt]). Theon then moves on to education. Aphthonius instructs that "you will state the person's origin (τὸ γένος), which you will divide into national origin (ἐθνός), homeland (πατρίδα), ancestors (προγόνους), and parents (πατέρας)" (Aphthonius, *Progym.* 8 [22] [mod. trans. Kennedy, 108; text Rabe]). The next *topos* that Aphthonius treats is upbringing (ἀνατροφή).

⁶⁰Hermogenes, *Progym.* 7 [15] (trans. Kennedy, 82; text Rabe).

Nicolaus states that the “first heading” of the encomium is “from origin” (ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους), which includes nationality (ἔθνος), native city (πόλις), and ancestors (προγόνος).⁶¹ He then states, “After these remarks about origin, we shall come to the circumstances of his birth (ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως).”⁶² The examples that he then provides for the birth *topos* are the dream of Pericles’ mother and the dreams concerning Cyrus’ mother. In his treatise on the imperial encomium speech, Menander the Rhetor also reflects this convention of discussing the origin and birth of a person.⁶³ The origin *topos* can include discussion of native country (πατρίς), city (πόλις), and family (γένος), if these topics are indeed worthy of note. Menander then moves on to discuss the circumstances surrounding the birth (περὶ τῆς γενέσεως); “and if any divine sign (σύμβολον) occurred at the time of his birth, either on land or in the heavens or on the sea,”⁶⁴ it should be mentioned. The dream of Cyrus’ mother and Romulus’ suckling of the she-wolf are offered as examples. Menander also advises that one should invent (πλάσσω) such signs if it can be done so convincingly. Thus, the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition indicates that origin and birth are conventional *topoi* of encomiastic rhetoric, which has as its goal the

⁶¹Nicolaus, *Progym.* 8 [50] (Kennedy, 156; text Felten).

⁶²Nicolaus, *Progym.* 8 [51] (Kennedy, 157; text Felten).

⁶³Menander, *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 2.369-371 (Russell and Wilson, 78-83).

⁶⁴Menander, *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν* 2.371 (Russell and Wilson, 80-81).

exhibition of a person's virtue, excellence, and greatness.⁶⁵ This tradition also reveals that when the birth *topos* is treated dreams are presented as an illustration of how it can be developed.

These comments from the Greek progymnasmata are not just prescriptive for compositional exercises, but they also are descriptive of ancient literary practices, as the examples offered come from literary texts not speeches. Thus, the dreams concerning Cyrus's mother come from Herodotus's *Histories*. After a description of the reigns of Cyrus's ancestors (1.95-107), Herodotus describes two dreams associated with the birth of Cyrus. The two dreams were experienced by Cyrus's grandfather Astyages; they were symbolic dreams about his daughter Mandane. The first dream was of Mandane "urinating so much that it filled his own city and overflowed all of Asia."⁶⁶ The second dream was similar: "It seemed that from the pudendum of this daughter came forth a vine, and the vine covered all of Asia."⁶⁷ The dreams signify the future rule and power of Mandane's child, Cyrus. The dream of Pericles's mother is also found in Herodotus as well as Plutarch.⁶⁸ Both authors give information about Pericles's origin and then mention a dream that his mother has while pregnant; she dreams

⁶⁵Cf. Theon, *Progym.* 9.1-2 (Kennedy, 50); Hermogenes, *Progym.* 7 [14-15] (Kennedy, 81); Nicolaus, *Progym.* 8 [48-49] (Kennedy, 155); Aphthonius, *Progym.* 8 [21] (Kennedy, 108).

⁶⁶Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107.

⁶⁷Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.108.

⁶⁸Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.131; Plutarch, *Per.* 3.2.

that she gives birth to a lion, which portends his future greatness as political and military leader of Athens. This encomiastic pattern of origin and birth dream is also found in Plutarch's *bios* of Alexander the Great.⁶⁹ The parents of Alexander, Philip and Olympias, each experience a symbolic dream that signifies Alexander future greatness. While betrothed (ἀρμόζω) and before "they came together in the bride-chamber" (συνείρχθησαν εἰς τὸν θάλαμον), Olympias dreams "that a peal of thunder and a lightening bolt fell upon her womb, and from the lightening strike a great fire was kindled, and then after having burst into flames everywhere it was extinguished."⁷⁰ After the marriage but before the birth of Alexander, Philip dreams that he puts a seal in the image of a lion upon his wife's womb. Dreams are also associated with the births of Augustus⁷¹ and Moses,⁷² though these accounts lack a discussion of origin.

The Gospel of Matthew is representative of this literary-rhetorical tradition, beginning with Jesus' ancestry and birth.⁷³ The origin *topos* (1:1-17) is

⁶⁹Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.1-3.

⁷⁰Plutarch, *Alex.* 2.2.

⁷¹Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4.

⁷²L.A.B. 9.10; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.212-216.

⁷³This encomiastic pattern has also been observed by Philip L. Shuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 92-98. Shuler, however, mistakenly interprets the presences of these *topoi* as indicators of genre. For a critique of and correction to Shuler, see Richard A. Burrige, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 83-86.

marked by the initial prescript (1:1), which identifies Jesus as son of David, son of Abraham (βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυιδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ), and developed by the subsequent genealogy (1:2-17). After the genealogy, Matthew turns to the birth of Jesus (1:18-25), even introducing this section with the same term (γένεσις) used by the rhetors who discuss the birth *topos*: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was thus” (τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ γένεσις οὕτως ἦν; 1:18a).⁷⁴ Like the description of the progymnasmata and the convention of other ancient writers, Matthew develops the birth *topos* with a dream narrative. While Joseph and Mary are betrothed (μνηστεύω) but “before they came together” (πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτούς), Joseph experiences a visitant dream that reveals the circumstances of Mary’s pregnancy (“that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit”; 1:20) and announces the child’s future greatness (“he will save his people from their sins”; 1:21).⁷⁵ An ancient audience would hear Matthew’s narrative of Jesus in light of the encomiastic pattern and tradition of

⁷⁴It should be noted that there is a textual variant for γένεσις in 1:18, though it is well attested by the manuscript tradition: P¹) B C P W Z Δ Θ f¹ l 2211. The term γέννησις is attested by L f³ 33 Maj. Bruce Metzger notes that the term γέννησις “became the customary word used in patristic literature to refer to the Nativity,” thus explaining its appearance in the Byzantine text (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [2d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelsesellschaft, 1994], 7).

⁷⁵If vss. 22-23 are part of the angel’s message, and not a narrative aside, the future greatness of the unborn child is also described in terms of divine presence (“God with us”).

birth dreams, which proleptically signifies the distinction and honor of the unborn child.

Matthew, however, is not simply writing discursively, his presentation of Jesus is in the form of a narrative. The dream report of Matt 1:18b-25 is also a literary device that functions in the plot of Matthew's story of Jesus. Mary's pregnancy by the Holy Spirit (ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου) creates a situation for Joseph in which he decides to divorce Mary. This decision, however, is never acted upon, because a visitant dream intervenes explaining to Joseph the circumstances surrounding Mary's pregnancy and encouraging him "to take Mary as his wife" (παραλαβεῖν Μαριάμ τὴν γυναῖκά σου; 1:20) and to name the child. As is customary of dream reports, Joseph acts according to the message of the dream, taking Mary as his wife and naming the child Jesus. The dream protects Mary and her unborn child from the shame and negative consequences that a divorce and unwed pregnancy might produce. The dream report also functions to solve the anomaly and enigma in the genealogy,⁷⁶ where Joseph does not "beget" (ἐγέννησεν) Jesus but is simply referred to as the husband of Mary (1:16). How is it, then, that the genealogy of Joseph can be

⁷⁶Stendhal, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Matthew 1–2," 60-61, though his description of 1:18-25 as an "enlarged footnote" (61) to the genealogy overstates the relationship. For the relationship between Matt 1:18-25 and the genealogy, see also L. Cantwell, "The Parentage of Jesus: Mt 1:18-21," *NovT* 24 (1982): 304-315.

claimed for Jesus? The visitant dream commands Joseph to name the child, which would be an act of taking the child as his own.⁷⁷

Therefore, the dream of Matt 1:18b-25 functions at two levels. First, the dream contributes to the encomiastic pattern of describing the origin and birth of a person. As the motif of the birth *topos*, the dream signifies the future significance and greatness of the yet born Jesus. Secondly, the dream is a literary device that functions within the plot of Matthew's story of Jesus. The dream prevents Joseph from divorcing Mary, which in turn protects Mary and her unborn child. The dream also prompts Joseph to take actions that result in Jesus becoming a legitimate heir to Joseph's genealogy.

The dream report of Matt 1:18b-25 also contains features that are brought to light when read in the larger social and literary contexts of dreams, which the following seeks to demonstrate.

The Formula Quotation: Dreams and Prophecy. In the above discussion of the form of this Matthean dream, it was noted that the formula quotation of 1:22-23 could be read either as a narrative aside or a part of the angel's message. Most interpreters read it as a narrative aside, disrupting the narrative structure of the angel's command (vv. 20-21) and Joseph's faithful response (vv. 24-25). It was also noted, however, that narrative asides in dream reports are found in other narrative texts, and so Matthew is not unique in providing a narrative aside in a

⁷⁷Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:209; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 98.

dream report. More importantly, though, is the content of the narrative aside: it announces the fulfillment of prophecy. The connection of dreams and oracles/prophecies in Greco-Roman literature was not uncommon.⁷⁸ This association in Josephus and Acts is especially noteworthy. In his *Jewish War*, Josephus describes his decision to surrender to the Romans as being based on the interpretation of his dreams along with his knowledge “of the prophecies of the sacred books.”⁷⁹ In linking these dreams and their interpretation with the prophecies of Scripture, Josephus infers that the dreams signify the fulfillment of the biblical prophecies. In *Antiquities*, Josephus recounts a dream of Alexander the Great.⁸⁰ Upon seeing the Jewish high priest, Alexander recalls a dream in which he saw a figure dressed like the high priest encouraging him not to hesitate but to commence his campaign to conquer Asia. Alexander is convinced that his successful military campaign has been directed by the God of the high priest. The high priest, in turn, shows Alexander the book of Daniel “in which it was showing a certain one of the Greeks destroying the rule of the Persians, and Alexander was convinced that he was the one signified [in the

⁷⁸Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.139; 3.124; Plutarch, *Them.* 26.2-4; *Arist.* 11.5; Suetonius, *Gal.* 9.2; *Aug.* 94.5.

⁷⁹Josephus, *War* 3.351. This example is even more interesting in that the information about Josephus’s ability to interpret dreams and his knowledge of the prophecies of scripture is given in a narrative aside.

⁸⁰Josephus, *Ant.* 11.333-336.

book].”⁸¹ The prophecy of Daniel confirms what was already indicated in his dream, and the dream initially provided the impetus and encouragement that contributed to the fulfillment of the prophecy. The dreams in the book of Acts are also related to prophecy. As discussed in Chapter four, the dreams in the book of Acts are themselves fulfillments of the prophecy of Joel, which was quoted in Peter’s speech at the Pentecost event (2:17-20). The dreams, and visions, throughout Acts are signs that the Joel prophecy is being fulfilled in the life and ministry of the church.

Thus, Matthew follows this literary convention of relating dreams and prophecies.⁸² If read as a narrative aside, Matthew informs the reader that the dream message contributes to the fulfillment of prophecy. Given this association of dreams and prophecies, the narrative aside becomes even less intrusive. If read as part of the angel’s message, the formula quotation takes on an interpretive, revelatory quality, which will now be explored.

Oneirocritic Aspects of Matt 1:18b-25. The dream report of Matt 1:18b-25 contains interpretive aspects, which would be familiar to Matthew’s readers given the ancient social and literary contexts of dreams. First, ancient interpretation of dreams included a variety of plays on words. Saul Lieberman

⁸¹Josephus, *Ant.* 11.337.

⁸²Cf. also Matt 2:13-15, 22-23.

gives a number of examples from both Greek and rabbinic sources,⁸³ including the use of homonyms, numerical value of letters, acronyms, the transposing of letters, and division of one word into two parts. An example of this kind of approach to dream interpretation is found in Plutarch's *bios* of Alexander.⁸⁴ While making siege against the city of Tyre, Alexander has a dream in which a satyr (σάτυρος) is mocking him. Alexander has difficulty seizing the satyr but eventually succeeds. The dream is then interpreted by the diviners, who base their interpretation on the word satyr (σάτυρος); the diviners say, "Tyre will be yours" (Σὴ γενήσεται Τύρος). Though the dream of Matt 1:18-25 is not a symbolic dream requiring interpretation, the dream message includes interpretative wordplays whose presence in a dream report would be familiar to an ancient audience. The angel tells Joseph to name the child Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins" (1:21). Interpreters have noted that there is play on the name Jesus (Ἰησοῦς) and the activity of salvation.⁸⁵ The name Ἰησοῦς is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means "Yahweh is salvation." Thus, the name Jesus signifies the unborn child's role in God's salvation. This

⁸³Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America 18; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), 70-78.

⁸⁴Plutarch, *Alex.* 24.4-5.

⁸⁵Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:209-10; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 19-20; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 98; Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 45-46; and David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 23.

interpretative dimension continues with the announcement that the child will also, according to scripture, be called Emmanuel (Ἐμμανουήλ), which is then explicitly stated to mean “God is with us” (μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός; 1:23). Thus, the dream report of Matt 1:18-25 includes interpretative wordplays that were familiar in ancient oneiric material, and these interpretative features contribute to the announcement of the unborn child’s significance.⁸⁶

Given this interpretative feature of the angel’s message, the angel then takes on the persona of interpreter and revealer. Part of the developing angelology of Middle Judaism, including Christianity, was the role of angels as interpreters of dreams and visions and dream-vision figures who reveal the divine will. Much of this role is found in apocalyptic literature,⁸⁷ but non-apocalyptic literature also contains this motif. For example, in the *Ladder of Jacob* the angel Sariel, who is “in charge of dreams,” is told to “go and make Jacob understand the meaning of the dream he has had and explain to him everything

⁸⁶Cf. *L.A.B* 42.3, where Samson’s mother is visited by an angel in a dream or vision – it is uncertain whether she is sleeping or not – and is told that she will give birth to a son; she is to “call his name Samson, for this one will be dedicated to your Lord” (Harrington, *OTP*). Harrington notes that “Ps-Philo may have had in mind a derivation from the Heb. *šmš* (minister, serve) in light of Samson’s Nazirite status” (*OTP*, 2:356). Cf. also *Jos. Asen.* 15:7(6), where in a vision an angel tells Aseneth, “And your name shall no longer be called Aseneth, but your name shall be City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God . . .” (Burchard, *OTP*).

⁸⁷Cf. Dan 7:16-28; 8:18-26; *T. Levi* 2:7 – 5:6; 2 *Bar.* 55:2ff; 1 *En.* 18:14 – 19:2; 22:1ff; 40:9-10; Rev 17:3-18.

he saw.”⁸⁸ The angelic role of interpreter is also attested in the Jewish magical tradition found in the magic book *Sepher Ha-Razim*.⁸⁹ One of the magic rituals addresses the forty four angels who are “in charge of dreaming” and includes the request, “make known to me what is in the heart of N son of N and what is his desire, and what is the interpretation of his dream and what is his thought.”⁹⁰ The whole of *Jubilees*, which is a re-writing of Genesis and part of Exodus, is presented as a revelation to Moses by “the angel of the presence.”⁹¹ Closer to the Matthew’s dream report are the dream-vision angels featured in *Joseph and Aseneth* 14.1 – 15:15, Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (*Biblical Antiquities*) 9.10, and Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities* 2.210-216. The angel of the Lord in the dream report of Matt 1:18b-25 fits well within this tradition of angels, dreams, and revelation. Moreover, this tradition also provides a context in which the fulfillment quotation can be read as part of the angel’s message. The angel reveals how the circumstances fulfill prophecy and the manner in which the child will fulfill his salvific role: divine presence (Emmanuel).⁹²

⁸⁸*Lad. Jac.* 3:2 (Lunt, *OTP*).

⁸⁹See Chapter 2 for a discussion of this text.

⁹⁰*Sepher Ha-Razim* 2:229-30 (Morgan, 42).

⁹¹*Jub.* 1:27 – 2:1 (Wintermute, *OTP*).

⁹²For a study of Matthew’s soteriology, see David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God’s People in the First Gospel* (SNTSMS 90; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

The Dream of Matt 1:18b-25 and the Quotation of Isa 7:14. In addition to its prophetic function, the quotation of Isa 7:14 in the message of the dream report also (1:23) reflects a literary praxis found in other literary dreams. In Chapter Three, it was shown that a number of dream reports included quotes or allusions to Homer.⁹³ In the Jewish tradition of literary dreams, this intertextuality is paralleled by the quotation or echo of the Jewish Scriptures. For example, in Pseudo-Philo's narration of Balaam's dream,⁹⁴ the dream message is a highly condensed version of the ancestral narratives that rehearses the blessing and covenant relationship between God and Israel. This quotation and/or allusion to the Jewish Scriptures in a dream is found again in Pseudo-Philo's representation of Joshua's covenant renewal speech.⁹⁵ Like Balaam's dream, Joshua's dream rehearses God's past dealings with Israel in a condensed form, but the echoes and allusions to the biblical story are unambiguous. Matthew's quotation of Isa 14:7 in the dream report of Matt 18:b-25 reflects this intertextual quality of dreams, in which dreams are the locus for allusions or quotes of a culture's foundational literature.

⁹³Cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 26.3 (quoting *Od.* 4.354-355); Plutarch, *Luc.* 12.1 (allusion to *Od.* 4.335-339); Plato, *Cri.* 44a-44b (quoting *Il.* 9.363); Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.9.6 (quoting *Il.* 23.66-67); Longus, *Daphn.* 3.28.1 (allusion to *Od.* 9.315); Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 5.22.1-2 (allusions to *Od.* 13.397ff; 18.67-68; *Il.* 10.261; *Od.* 13.332; 1.1; 19.392ff respectively).

⁹⁴*L.A.B.* 18.1-6.

⁹⁵*L.A.B.* 23.2-18.

The Dream of Matt 1:18b-25 and Moses Typology? The dream of Matt 1:18b-25 is often presented as another literary contribution to Matthew's characterization of Jesus as a new Moses.⁹⁶ The developing traditions about Moses sometimes included a dream, whether by Pharaoh,⁹⁷ Moses' sister Miriam,⁹⁸ or Moses' father Amram.⁹⁹ The closest, and most referenced, parallel to the dream of Matt 1:18b-25 is the dream of Amram in Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. The comparison is usually presented as follows.¹⁰⁰ In Josephus, Moses' father Amram is fearful about his wife's pregnancy because of Pharaoh's campaign to destroy all Hebrew infant males, and so he prays to God. In response to Amram's prayer and faith, God appears to Amram in a dream recounting past dealings with Israel, exhorting him not to fear, and telling him of his unborn son's future greatness: "he shall escape those who are watching to destroy him, and, reared in marvelous wise, he shall deliver the Hebrew race

⁹⁶For example, Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 144-145; Dominic M. Crossan, "Structure & Theology of Mt. 1.18-2.23," *Cahiers de Joséphologie* 16 (1968): 1-17; and Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 27-30.

⁹⁷Tg. Ps.-J on Ex 1:15. For even later sources (medieval), see Crossan, "Structure & Theology of Mt. 1.18-2.23," 4-7.

⁹⁸L.A.B 9:10.

⁹⁹Josephus, *Ant.* 2.210-216.

¹⁰⁰For example, see Allison, *A New Moses*, 144; and Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 98.

from their bondage in Egypt.”¹⁰¹ In Matthew, Jesus’ father Joseph is troubled about his betrothed wife’s pregnancy because they have not yet married, and so he decides to divorce her. In response, an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream explaining the circumstances of the pregnancy and telling him of the unborn child’s future greatness: “he shall save his people from their sins” (1:21). Thus, as the inference goes, the dream of Matt 1:18b-25 is intended to evoke the tradition of Moses and therefore contribute to Matthew’s Moses typology of Jesus.

This sort of comparison, however, must be approached with some caution. Many of the parallels can be attributed to the form and function of the dream report. Dreams are often connected with the birth of a child. For example, one could draw some parallels with the birth of Samson in Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (*Biblical Antiquities*).¹⁰² Samson’s mother is despondent because she is barren and so she prays to God. In response to her prayer, an angel appears to her in a dream acknowledging her prayer and announcing the conception and greatness of her son: “And behold you will conceive and bear a son, and you will call his name Samson, for this one will be dedicated to your Lord. . . . [H]e will free Israel from the hand of the

¹⁰¹Josephus, *Ant.* 2.215-216.

¹⁰²*L.A.B.* 42.1-4.

Philistines.”¹⁰³ The “parallels” between this dream and Joseph’s dream are perhaps more striking than those found with Amram’s dream, but any literary imitation or influence is simply difficult to demonstrate given the literary convention of dreams.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the context of Amram’s dreams and Joseph’s dream differ. The dreams associated with the Moses tradition all come in the context of Pharaoh’s intention to destroy infant males born to the Hebrews. As shown above, the dream of Joseph is best understood in the context of encomiastic tradition. The difference of context is even more significant when one notes that the motif of royal threat is actually found in Matt 2.¹⁰⁵ If the dream of Joseph is intended to contribute to the Moses typology of Jesus, this association would have been much more overt in the context of Matt 2. If the

¹⁰³L.A.B. 42.3 (Harrington, *OTP*)

¹⁰⁴It is worth quoting Daniel Harrington’s conclusion to his comparison of the birth narratives in Pseudo-Philo, which includes a version of the Moses story, and the New Testament: “The parallels show that roughly contemporary writers with differing methods and concerns used some of the same literary devices and motifs in telling the stories about the births of their heroes” (“Birth Narratives in Pseudo-Philo’s Biblical Antiquities and the Gospels,” in *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in Honor of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J.* [ed. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Maurya P. Horgan, and Paul J. Kobelski; New York: Crossroad, 1989], 324).

¹⁰⁵This motif and the dreams associated with it in Matt 2 will be discussed in the next section.

For purposes of the history of scholarship, it is interesting to note that an “early” Dominic Crossan explained these differences in context on the possible historicity of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus: “One must still look elsewhere for an explanation of Matthew’s entire narrative [sequence]. And among such possible sources must still remain — history, older traditions of what had actually happened at Jesus’ birth” (“Structure & Theology of Mt. 1.18-2.23,” 15).

dream of Matt 1:18b-25 is read in light of the Moses story, it is a *retrospective* reading evoked by the *explicit* parallels of Moses and Jesus found in Matt 2.

The Dreams of Matthew 2

The dreams of Matthew 2 are best understood by considering first the literary character of this chapter, which should be read as an amplification of the birth *topos* that was introduced in 1:18-25. The genitive absolute of 2:1a explicitly links the subsequent narrative with the previous unit (1:18-25): “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of king Herod” (τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ γεννηθέντος ἐν Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου τοῦ Βασιλέως). Moreover, the birth of Jesus continues to be the event driving the plot. Having followed a star to Jerusalem as a sign, the magi ask about the location of “the one who is born king of the Jews” (2:2). In turn, Herod is disturbed and also inquires about the place where “the Christ is to be born” (2:4). Except for the transitional clause of 2:1a, Jesus is consistently referred to simply as “the child” (τὸ παιδίον) and always in relation to his mother (2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21). Thus, whereas Matt 1:18-25 deals primarily with the situation before the birth of Jesus, Matt 2 recounts events following the birth of Jesus; but both literary units are developments of the birth *topos* that treat the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth.

As an amplification of the birth *topos*, Matt 2 represents a conventional, cultural hypotext:¹⁰⁶ the threat and rescue of a royal child.¹⁰⁷ The plot of this cultural hypotext is the following. A king or ruler becomes aware of the birth of a child that threatens his reign. This perceived threat is prompted by signs that accompany the birth of the child and portend the child's future greatness. The king devises a plan to kill the child, but the plan is thwarted when the divine intervenes, usually guiding an individual or persons who have been enlisted by the king to destroy the child not to carry out the king's plan. The child is saved, and the king's threat is realized when the child grows up. For example, the birth of Cyrus¹⁰⁸ is accompanied by two dreams, which are experienced by the king Astyages and signify a threat to his reign from his daughter's unborn child. When the child is born, the king commands his servant Harpagus to take the child home and kill it. Unable to bring himself to carry out the command,

¹⁰⁶The term "cultural hypotext" is borrowed from Loveday Alexander, who uses it to describe a cultural story or plot that finds expression in various literary texts. See Loveday C. A. Alexander, "New Testament Narrative and Ancient Epic," in *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (Library of New Testament Studies 289; London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 169 and 181.

¹⁰⁷Gunkel, Hermann, "The Interpretation of the New Testament," *The Monist* 13 (1903): 410; and Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (trans. W. C. Linss; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 129, and 152-155 for a helpful, comparative chart that lists the various literary texts of this cultural hypotext. The most relevant texts for our purposes are Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107-113 (Cyrus), Plutarch, *Rom.* 2.3-6 (Romulus and Remus); and Josephus, *Ant.* 2.205-227 (Moses); for truncated versions see Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.92 (Cypselus); Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.3 (Augustus) and *Nero* 36 (Nero).

¹⁰⁸Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107-113.

Harpagus enlists a herdsman to destroy the child. But the divine (δαίμων) intercedes, creating a situation where the herdsman takes the child as his own.

Another example is provided by Plutarch who recounts a version of the birth of Romulus and Remus,¹⁰⁹ which is accompanied – even instigated – by a vision and oracle. The king, Tarchetius, intends to put the pregnant handmaiden to death, but the goddess Hestia appears to him in a dream and forbids him to kill the girl. The king does not murder the handmaiden, but he does keep her busy and close by with the intention of killing her offspring at birth. When the handmaiden gives birth to twins, the king instructs a certain Teratius to kill the twin boys. Teratius exposes the twins beside a river, but a female wolf nurses the babies and birds provide feed them with morsels of food until the twins are found and taken in by a herdsman.

Even the biblical story of Moses came to be reshaped according to this cultural hypotext. In Josephus's retelling of the Moses story,¹¹⁰ Pharaoh's decision to destroy all the male Hebrew babies is not based on their growing population but because one of the Egyptian diviners (ἱερογραμματεὺς) announces to Pharaoh that "a certain one will be born at that time to the Israelites who will debase the political supremacy of the Egyptians."¹¹¹ This retelling of the Moses story also includes a dream experienced by Moses' father Amram.

¹⁰⁹Plutarch, *Rom.* 2.3-6. See also 3.1 – 4.3 for another version of the story.

¹¹⁰Josephus, *Ant.* 2.212-216.

¹¹¹Josephus, *Ant.* 2.205.

Though it includes a message about the child's future greatness, the primary purpose of the dream is to encourage Amram, who then is emboldened and takes the proper measures to protect the child (i.e., placing the child in a basket upon the Nile).

Matthew's story of Jesus is also shaped by this cultural hypotext, and it is in this context that the dreams of Matt 2 function. The birth of Jesus is accompanied by a star, whose significance is discerned by certain diviners (μάγοι) from the East. The diviners come to Jerusalem inquiring about "the one born king of the Jews" (2:3) in order that they may offer the appropriate gestures of honor (προσκυνέω) to the new born king. The presence and inquiry of the diviners greatly disturbs (ταράσσω) the present king of the Jews, Herod. Under the pretext of also desiring to honor the new born king, Herod instructs the diviners to find the child and then to return and tell him the location of the child. Given the cultural hypotext, an ancient audience would be suspicious of Herod's intentions, a suspicion that is confirmed as the narrative unfolds. After finding and honoring the child, the diviners are "warned in a dream not to return to Herod" (χρηματισθέντες κατ' ὄναρ μὴ ἀνακάμψαι πρὸς Ἡρώδη; 2:12). A dream is also experienced by Joseph, the child's father, in which an angel of the Lord directs him take the child and his mother to Egypt, "for Herod is about to seek for the child in order to destroy it" (2:13). Herod's plan is thwarted by the obedient responses of both the diviners and Joseph. Though the child is

protected, Herod's desperation leads to the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem (2:16-18). While in Egypt, another dream informs Joseph about Herod's death and directs him to bring the child and his mother back "to the land of Israel" (2:19). But Herod's son, Archelaus, proves to be a threat as well; Joseph is again "warned in a dream" (χρηματισθεὶς κατ' ὄναρ; 2:22) and relocates the child and his mother to the region of Galilee, where the child would be safe from Archelaus. Thus, the four dreams of Matthew 2 function in this cultural hypotext of the threat and rescue of a royal child. The dreams are divine interventions that thwart the king's plan and protect the child from harm.¹¹²

But just as the dream of 1:18b-25 functions at two levels, so do the dreams of Matt 2. Not only do the dreams of Matt 2 function within the conventional plot of the threat and rescue of a royal child, the dreams also contribute to the specific narrative of Matthew. Two dreams initiate actions that fulfill prophecies. When Joseph is warned of Herod's plot and commanded to flee to Egypt in a dream (2:13), the situation arises that fulfills the prophecy, "Out of Egypt I called my son" (2:15). And when Joseph fears the reign of Herod's son, Archelaus, a dream directs him to the region of Galilee, where he settles in the city of Nazareth (2:22-23). This circumstance fulfills prophecy: "He will be called a Nazaraean." As in the case of 1:18b-25, the relationship of dreams and prophecies/oracles contributing to the fulfillment of one or the other would be a

¹¹²For dreams that function as protection, see Josephus, *Ant.* 11.326-335; Plutarch, *Them.* 26.2-4; 30.1-3; Suetonius, *Aug.* 91; Chariton, *Chaer.* 2.9.1-6; Longus, *Daphn.* 2.26.5–28.1; *Acts Andr.* [M 3b-6; L 34] 22.

literary convention familiar to an ancient audience. In another instance, one dream accomplishes the statement announced in another dream. Part of the angel's dream message in 2:13-15 commands Joseph to stay in Egypt "until I tell to you" (2:13). The dream of 2:19 fulfills this anticipation: while in Egypt the angel appears to Joseph in a dream informing him of Herod's death and directing him to return to his homeland. Thus, in addition to protecting the child from Herod, the dreams of Matt 2 also prompt plot developments that are specific to Matthew's narrative and literary-theological interests.

There are other aspects of the dreams in Matt 2 that are brought to light when read in the larger social and literary contexts of dreams in the Greco-Roman world, which the following will illustrate.

The Oneiric tradition of the Magi. Matthew's inclusion of "magi from the east" in his story of Jesus would invoke for an ancient audience images of diviners whose craft included the various forms of divination, including astrology and dream interpretation.¹¹³ This image would include an estimation of the magi along a spectrum of modest approval to suspicion, though for Matthew's audience a more negative and suspicious opinion is likely.¹¹⁴ For

¹¹³Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107-108, 120; 7.37.2-4; Strabo, *Georg.* 15.3.15; Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 30.6.16-17. Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 4.5.2; *Alex.* 3.4; Cicero, *Div.* 1.23.47.

¹¹⁴See Mark Allan Powell, "The Magi as Wise Men: Re-examining a Basic Supposition," *NTS* 46 (2000): 5-8, for a review of both Greco-Roman and Jewish sources and the conclusion that "Matthew's readers are expected to regard magi, generally, not as wise but as fools" (8).

example, it is the magi who provide the interpretation of the dream that prompts the Persian king Astyages to kill the child Cyrus.¹¹⁵ In the context of his *bios* of Alexander, Plutarch recounts how the Persian king Darius was misled by magi who interpret his dream “for favor rather than according to the truth” (πρὸς χάριν . . . μᾶλλον ἢ κατὰ τὸ εἰκός).¹¹⁶ Matthew, however, plays off these negative perceptions in his narrative and subverts the audience’s expectations. Though the magi’s arrival alerts Herod to the birth of a royal child (2:1-2), it is the Jewish leaders who interpret the prophecy that sets in motion Herod’s plot to destroy the child (2:3-6). The magi are unknowingly enlisted in Herod’s plan, but on account of a dream they take no part in it (2:12). This reception of a dream points to another unexpected turn in Matthew’s narrative. Magi are known for interpreting the dreams of others, but in Matthew’s narrative they themselves receive the divine message. Thus, an ancient audience would bring to Matthew’s narrative a knowledge of the oneiric tradition of the magi, but Matthew subverts this tradition to contrast the character of the Jewish leaders and, perhaps, to emphasize the active role of God in the origin of Jesus.

The Dreams of Matt 2:12 & 2:13-15: A Double-dream Report? In Chapter Three, the literary convention of a double-dream report was discussed and

¹¹⁵Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107-108.

¹¹⁶Plutarch, *Alex.*, 18.4.

several examples were offered.¹¹⁷ The double-dream narrative involves two characters who each have a dream. The two dreams can be identical, similar, or entirely different, but they are connected in some way to “produce what may be called a ‘circumstance of mutuality’ between the two dreamers.”¹¹⁸ Beyond a “circumstance of mutuality” between the two dreamers, a double-dream narrative can also produce a “circumstance of benefit” for someone beyond the two dreamers. For example, in Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe* the bandit Theron intends to throw the heroine Callirhoe overboard. That night, however, he has dream: “When he fell asleep he saw a dream (κοιμηθεὶς δὲ ἐνύπνιον εἶδε), a closed door; so he decided to wait for that day.”¹¹⁹ As a consequence, Theron delays the drowning of Callirhoe one day, and during that day he becomes acquainted with a certain Leonas, the administrator (διοικητής) of the widower Dionysius' household. Sensing an opportunity, Theron proposes the sale of Callirhoe to Leonas for Dionysius' services. Leonas responds, “Some god has delivered you to me to be my benefactor. Why, you are setting out before me

¹¹⁷Josephus, *Ant.* 11.326-335; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.57.3-4; and Acts 9:10-19; 10:3-16. See also Livy, *Hist. Rome* 8.6.9-11; Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.43-84; Athenaeus, *Delph.* 13.575; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 4.1.4-8, Longus, *Daphn.* 1.7.1-3; Heliiodorus, *Aeth.* 8.11.1-9; Petronius, *Sat.* 104; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.6; *Acts Thom.* 29-34; *Acts John* 18-19.

¹¹⁸Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1414-1419.

¹¹⁹Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.12.5.

in reality what I dreamed about (ὄνειροπόλου)!"¹²⁰ At one level, both Theron and Leonas benefit; Theron receives payment for Callirhoe, and Leonas provides a good service for his master by acquiring Callirhoe. Within the plot of the story, however, the dreams function primarily to protect Callirhoe from being killed; she ultimately benefits from the circumstance created by the dreams. Also, as indicated in Chapter 3, the double-vision reports of Acts 9 and 10 function in tandem to serve the greater purpose of the gospel and to motivate the events that will ultimately determine the decision of Gentile inclusion in Acts 15; the Gentiles are the ones who in the end benefit from the visions accorded to Paul, Ananias, Cornelius, and Peter.

The dreams of Matt 2:12 and 2:13-15 may represent this kind of literary elaboration of the dream report. After making obeisance and offering gifts to the child Jesus, the magi are “warned in a dream not to return to Herod” (χρηματισθέντες κατ’ ὄναρ μὴ ἀνακάμψαι πρὸς Ἡρώδη; 2:12). Though the content or experience of the dream is not narrated, the function of the dream will become apparent: to protect the child from the plot of Herod. Immediately following the reference to the magi’s dream and their response (“they departed to their [own] country by another way”), Matthew narrates a dream to Joseph in which the dream figure commands him to “take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt . . . , for Herod is about to seek for the child in order to destroy it” (2:13). The two dreams are obviously connected by their similar function to foil

¹²⁰Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.12.10.

the plot of Herod and to safeguard the child Jesus. In addition to their narrative proximity, the dreams are also connected by the second dream (2:13) making explicit what was not stated – but suspected – in the first dream (2:12): Herod’s intentions. And finally, the two dreams may represent a double-dream report based on the narrative presentation of the events occurring simultaneously. In their comments on the Matt 2:13, Davies and Allison raise the question, “Does the present tense, φαίνεται (cf. 2.19 but contrast 1.20, which has the aorist), imply simultaneity, that is, does it make the angelic appearance concurrent with the magi’s departure,”¹²¹ which is repeated in 2:13 as genitive absolute (ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν)? In other words, the grammar of 2:13 may intend to communicate the concurrent action of the magi’s response to their dream and Joseph’s experience of his own dream. The factor that works against reading the dreams of 2:12 and 2:13 as a double-dream narrative is the lack of interaction between the dreamers themselves. Double-dream reports usually entail the two dreamers having some contact or dealings, even when the dreams create an advantage for a third party. The narrative of Matthew, however, never portrays Joseph and the magi interacting with one another. Notwithstanding this absence of interaction, the dreams of the magi and Joseph reveal several narrative associations and function together to produce a “circumstance of benefit” for the

¹²¹Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:259. Contra Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 121, who notes that the historic present is simply a structural marker for beginning a new subsection.

child Jesus. An ancient audience may very well have read the two dreams as a literary unit.¹²²

The Dream of Matthew 27:19

With the dream of Matt 27:19, the reader is far beyond the narrative of Jesus' birth. This dream is referenced in the context of Jesus' trial before Pilate, which will quickly lead to his torture and crucifixion (27:27-54). Verse 29 reads as follows:

While [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat (ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος), his wife sent [word] to him saying, "[Let there be] nothing between you and that innocent man (μηδὲν σοὶ καὶ τῷ δίκαιῳ ἐκείνῳ), for today I have suffered many things in a dream on account of him" (πολλὰ γὰρ ἔπαθον σήμερον κατ' ὄναρ δι' αὐτόν).

Just as with the dreams in the infancy narrative, Matthew is unique among the canonical Gospels in relating this incident. Unlike the dreams of the infancy narrative, the meaning and nature of this dream presents the reader with some interpretative ambiguities.

For a reader of Matthew's narrative, the phrase κατ' ὄναρ in 27:19 would certainly evoke the dreams of Matt 1–2, which functioned principally as

¹²²Reading the dreams of Matt 2:12 and 2:13 as a double-dream report calls into question the regular practice of scholars dividing Matt 2 exactly between the two dreams (2:1-12 and 2:13-23). For example, see Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:224 & 1:257; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 127 & 141; Margaret Davies, *Matthew*, 35 & 37; Keener, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 97 & 106; Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 103 & 120; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 22 & 32; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols.; 2d ed.; HTKNT 1; Freiburg: Herder, 1992), 1:33 & 1:47. Notable exceptions include Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 48; and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991), 40.

divine mediums for the protection of Jesus: protection from illegitimacy (1:18b-25), protection from Herod (2:12, 13-14), and protection from Archelaus (2:22). Is the reader to understand the dream of Pilate's wife in a similar fashion, representing another intervention on God's part to protect Jesus? This understanding, however, would inevitably lead to a conclusion that the divine intervention failed, for Jesus is executed unjustly. Moreover, Matthew's narrative contains three predictions by Jesus himself that "it is necessary" (δεῖ; 16:21) for him to go to Jerusalem, to suffer, to be killed, and to be raised on the third day (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). The construction of these predictions indicates a divine necessity and intention in Jesus' suffering and death.¹²³ Thus, a reader would sense a different quality about the dream of Pilate's wife than the dreams of the infancy narrative.

The interpretative difficulty is compounded by the fact that the dream is not narrated nor is the meaning of the dream narrated. For example, though the dreams of 2:12 and 2:22 are not narrated, the meaning of the dreams is indicated: the magi are warned not to return to Herod and Joseph is warned to relocate in Galilee. Reference to the dream of Pilate's wife, however, is mentioned as part of her message to Pilate, which is given in direct discourse and contains her inference or interpretation of the dream. The reader is only given the perspective and understanding of Pilate's wife; there is no comment or explanation from an

¹²³The predictions in 17:22-23 and 20:18-19 have the future passive form of παραδίδωμι, which most likely reflects and is reminiscent of the divine necessity inherent in the δεῖ of 16:21. See Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 479, 507-508, 575.

omniscient narrator as to the meaning or purpose of the dream. Questions, then, arise as to the nature or content of her dream, and what is being emphasized. Was it a visitant dream like those in the infancy narrative, revealing Jesus' innocence and warning against a miscarriage of justice?¹²⁴ Does she suffer because of some concern that an innocent man might be found guilty? Or, is her suffering related, not to the execution of an innocent man, but to some sense of self-interest?¹²⁵ Does she suffer because the dream was a nightmare, portending some catastrophe or revealing the displeasure of the divine?¹²⁶ Warren Carter has the unusual interpretation that the message of Pilate's wife actually "functions as encouragement to Pilate to remove Jesus quickly." Again, he states, "No wonder she has suffered much! . . . Her dream seems to have revealed Jesus being faithful to God's saving purposes, and that is clearly bad

¹²⁴Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 3:587, actually use the term χρηματισμός (cf. 2:12, 22) to describe that Pilate's wife was "warned (by God) in a dream," which "makes her resemble Joseph and the magi, earlier characters to whom God sent reliable dreams."

¹²⁵Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1172, states, "The statement is made in terms of the interests of Pilate and his wife and not in terms of the interests of Jesus. . . . Should we detect a rather narrow self-interest in her language of suffering here?" Cf. Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2:456: „Die Sorge der Frau ist auf ihren Mann gerichtet.“

¹²⁶Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 34, states, "Der Traum der Frau des Pilatus ist als Alptraum gedacht. . . . Alpträume von Herrschenden werden in der gesamten antiken Literatur häufig erzählt; meist kündeten sie das göttliche Mißfallen bzw. göttliche Strafe an. Manchmal wird in einem weisheitlichen Kontext auch allgemein der Alpträume als Signale der Unsicherheit und Hinfälligkeit unseres Lebens gedacht (Sir. 40,3/6); immer sind sie ein großes Übel von ominöser Bedeutung (Ps. Sal. 6,3)."

news for Rome and Pilate!”¹²⁷ These questions, and their respective interpreters, simply highlight the vague nature of what Pilate’s wife actually experienced in her dream. Although the exact nature of the dream may remain ambiguous, the perspective of an ancient audience and the context of Matthew’s narrative provide helpful clues as to dream’s literary function.

Although the dream of Matt 27:19 is not narrated, a feature of the conventional dream form is most apparent: the reaction/response of Pilate’s wife. The reaction of Pilate’s wife to the dream is described in terms of “suffering” (πάσχω). This description would be understood in light of the common motif of fear or being troubled as a dreamer’s reaction to a dream. This motif can be found in several of Herodotus’s narration of dreams: “greatly dreaded the dream” (καταρρωδήσας τὸν ὄνειρον), “he feared the vision” (διδουκῶς τὴν ὄψιν), “fears for himself” (δείσας περὶ ἑωυτοῦ), and “being greatly afraid” (περιδεής γενόμενος).¹²⁸ In Longus’s novel, the bandit general Bryaxis “was very disturbed” (τεθορυβημένος) by his dream.¹²⁹ When Josephus narrates the dream of the Adiabene king, Monobozus, the reaction is one of “being troubled” (ταραχθείς).¹³⁰ Perhaps an ancient audience would recall the

¹²⁷Warren Carter, *Pontius Pilate: Portraits of a Roman Governor* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 94.

¹²⁸Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.34; 1.107; 3.30; and 7.14 respectively.

¹²⁹Longus, *Daphn.* 2.28.1.

¹³⁰Josephus, *Ant.* 20.19.

well known dream of Caesar's wife Calpurnia,¹³¹ which is recorded in several sources.¹³² Plutarch recounts how on the night before his death, Caesar noticed his wife "uttering indistinct words and inarticulate groans in her sleep; for it seemed (ἐδόκει) that she was holding her murdered husband in her arms and wailing for him."¹³³ The dream is narrated from the viewpoint of Caesar and lacks a full dream report, but the experience of anguish and agony are well expressed in the narration. Calpurnia's dream, of course, was just one ominous sign among others that portended Caesar's death.¹³⁴ The dream of Pilate's wife does not portend the death of Jesus, but it does function as one, even the first, of ominous signs connected with the death of Jesus. These signs include the darkness that occurs during the day (27:45), the splitting of the temple curtain (27:51), and the earthquake (27:52). Thus, the suffering of Pilate's wife that results from the dream would create for an ancient audience a sense of foreboding.

¹³¹Frenschkowski, "Traum und Traumdeutung im Matthäusevangelium," 33; and Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2:456, also note the possible connection with the dream of Caesar's wife.

¹³²Plutarch, *Caes.* 63.5-7; Suetonius, *Jul.* 81.3; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.115; Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 44.17.1.

¹³³Plutarch, *Caes.* 63.5.

¹³⁴Plutarch reports the dream of Caesar's wife Calpurnia as a part of his larger recounting of the "wondrous signs and apparitions" (σημεῖα θαυμάσια καὶ φάσματα; 63.1). Suetonius reports a number of "unmistakable signs" (*evidentibus prodigiis*; 81.1) that indicated the murder of Caesar.

The dream of Pilate's wife, and the message to Pilate that it initiates, is also a creative literary feature that connects several narrative dimensions in Matthew's story of Jesus; and as will be demonstrated this feature functions principally in terms of characterization. First, the message initiated by the dream contributes to a scene that parallels themes already introduced in the scene of Judas's remorse and death (27:1-10). Pilate's wife's message to her husband is literally, "nothing to you and to that righteous one" (μηδὲν σοὶ καὶ τῷ δικαίῳ ἐκείνῳ). John Nolland notes the similarity of this expression with the question of the demoniacs to Jesus in Matt 8:29, "what is there between us and you" (τί ἡμῶν καὶ σοὶ), which denotes "that the parties have [nothing] in common."¹³⁵ Closer in context and circumstance, however, is the response of the chief priests and elders to Judas, who attempts to return the thirty pieces of silver with the confession, "I have sinned by handing over innocent blood (ἡμαρτον παραδούς αἷμα ἀθώον; 27:4). The chief priests and elders respond in language comparable to the message of Pilate's wife: "What [is that] to us (τί πρὸς ἡμᾶς)? See [to it] yourself." The sentiment is that the chief priests and elders refuse to involve themselves in Judas's remorse and change of mind (μεταμέλομαι; 27:3). Likewise, the message of Pilate's wife is a warning for her husband not to involve himself in the judgment of this innocent man. The judicial deliberation, though, is already in progress, and Pilate accepts the choice of the crowd: the

¹³⁵Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1172.

release of Barabbas and the crucifixion for Jesus (27:20-23). Given the foreboding message with its divine origin (i.e., the dream), however, Pilate attempts to absolve himself of his involvement: “he took water and washed his hands before the crowd saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this one; see [to it] yourselves’” (ἀθῶός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου: ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε; 27:24).¹³⁶ Pilate and Judas are juxtaposed in Matt 27 as characters who participate in the condemnation of the innocent Jesus, but both also try to absolve themselves of this guilt. Their speech, however, provides a contrast between the two characters. Judas confesses his guilt in betraying “innocent blood” (αἷμα ἀθῶον). Pilate, on the other hand, announces himself “innocent” (ἀθῶός). Moreover, Pilate repeats to the crowd the unsympathetic comment that the chief priests and elders made to Judas: “See [to it] yourselves” (ὕμεῖς ὄψεσθε, 27:24; cf. 27:4, σὺ ὄψη).¹³⁷ This negative portrayal of Pilate is underscored by his refusal to heed his wife’s warning that was prompted by the dream. Given the

¹³⁶There is a textual variant of this passage, which is accepted by Davies and Allison (3:590): “the blood of this righteous one” (τοῦ δικαίου τούτου;) L W ^{f1, 13} Maj it^c, ff1, g1, l, q vg syr^h cop^{samss, bo}); cf. τούτου τοῦ δικαίου in A Δ 064 1230 l¹²³¹ it^{aur, f, h} syr^{p, pal}. The reading τούτου, accepted by UBS4 and NA²⁷ is supported by B D Θ it^{a, b, d}, ff2, r1 syr^s.

¹³⁷Cf. Luz, *Matthew 21-28: Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 500, who states, “Matthew has put [Pilate] in a sequence with Judas and the chief priests. He remains like them, even though he tried to hide behind the masquerade of a biblical ritual and to avoid complicit in the guilt of Jesus’ fate.”

divinatory nature of dreams in antiquity, an ancient audience would consider Pilate's unwillingness to heed the warning as impious and foolish.

The dream of Pilate's wife, and the message it prompts, creates another narrative comparison of characters and their actions. In 27:15-18, Pilate is honoring the Passover tradition of releasing a prisoner, presenting before the people the prisoner Barabbas and Jesus. It is during this proceeding that Pilate receives the message from his wife that he should have nothing to do with "that innocent man, for I have suffered many things in a dream on account of him" (27:19). Immediately upon this statement, Matthew narrates that "the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds that they should request Barabbas and have Jesus killed" (27:20). The narrative arrangement of these actions creates a scene in which Pilate's wife is conveying to her husband a divine gesture of Jesus' innocence at the same time that the Jewish leaders are convincing the crowds to call for Jesus' death. This contrast of characters and actions is highlighted by the fact that Pilate's wife is a Gentile who is made aware of Jesus' innocence and acts on his behalf based on a dream, while the Jewish leaders seek his death. The scene serves as a narrative parallel to the infancy narrative, in which the Gentile magi are made aware of Jesus' birth via a star and act on his behalf based on a dream. The Jewish leaders, however, are complicit with Herod in seeking to destroy the child Jesus. Thus, the dream of Pilate's wife is a literary feature of Matthew's Gospel that creates a narrative intertexture of contrasting characters, repetitive motifs, and narrative parallels.

Summary

The dreams of Matthew's Gospel function at several levels. First, the dreams of Matthew are found in literary-rhetorical motifs or practices with which an ancient audience would be familiar. The first dream of 1:18b-25 corresponds to the function of dreams in the encomiastic tradition of Greco-Roman literary-rhetorical practices. The birth of Jesus is a *topos* in which the dream signifies the future greatness and importance of Jesus. The dreams of Matt 2 function within the cultural hypotext of the threat and rescue of a royal child. The dreams are the divine means by which the child Jesus is protected from the threat of Herod.

Second, the Matthean dreams reflect certain literary praxes associated with the literary representation of dreams in Greco-Roman literature. Like other dream reports in Greco-Roman literature, the dream report of Matt 1:18b-25 is a literary device that facilitates quotes and/or allusions of other texts; in this case, the quote is from Isa 14:7. This literary dimension of Matthew's dreams is further evidenced in reading the dreams of Matt 2:12 and 2:13-15 as a double-dream report; that is a literary device that creates a "circumstance of benefit" for the child Jesus and his mother.

And third, the Matthean dreams are connected with themes and motifs common in other literary dreams. The dreams of Matt 1 – 2 are associated with and participate in the fulfillment of prophecy (1:22-23; 2:15, 23). Three out of the

five prophecy fulfillments in Matt 1–2 are linked to dreams; an ancient audience would find this connection customary. Furthermore, the Matthean dreams contribute to the presence of divination present in Matt 1–2, which includes the prophecies, the divinely appointed time (1:17), the divine conception (1:18, 20), and the star (2:2, 10). Paralleling this representation of divination at Jesus' birth, the dream of Pilate's wife introduces a certain ominous tone associated with Jesus' death and should be read along with the foreboding events of the daytime darkness, the destruction of the temple curtain, and the earthquake. These functions and qualities of Matthew's dreams demonstrate the First Gospel's participation in the literary conventions and practices of its time.

The Matthean dreams also function within the Gospel's particular narrative presentation of Jesus. So, the dream of 1:18b-25 not only satisfies the general expectations of encomiastic rhetoric, it also resolves the abnormality of the genealogy, in which Joseph is not presented as the father of Jesus. The dream of Pilate's wife is particularly creative in how it contributes to characterization and the repetition of motifs. The dream prompts this Gentile woman to send a message to her husband conveying the innocence of Jesus; this is in contrast to the Jewish leaders who are goading the crowd to call for Jesus' death. The reader would be reminded of the Gentile magi who obey a dream and do not participate in the plot to kill the child Jesus, yet the Jewish leaders share culpability in Herod's plot. The dream and its message also prompt a situation in which Pilate, like Judas, tries to absolve himself of any responsibility in Jesus' death. But

unlike Judas, Pilate comes off looking, and sounding, more like the chief priests and elders. In the end, Matthew's narrative of Jesus is literarily enhanced and rhetorically satisfying by his use of dreams.

The Significance of Dreams in Matthew's Portrait of Jesus

This chapter has focused on the literary character of the Matthean dreams, showing both their conventional nature and their specific narrative functions in Matthew's Gospel. It is important, however, to step back and consider how the Matthean dreams contribute to Matthew's overall portrait of Jesus. This consideration begins with a reminder that dreams in the Greco-Roman world constituted one form of divination.¹³⁸ Dreams were understood as a means by which the divine enters human affairs in order to bring about the divine will. Thus, an ancient audience would read the Matthean dreams as *theological* statements about the divine presence and purpose in the person of Jesus.

Matthew 1 – 2 is especially formative in providing this theological perspective for reading Matthew's story of Jesus. In addition to four dreams, these opening chapters also include the Holy Spirit (1:18, 20), prophecies (1:22; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23), and the star (2:2, 9), creating a kaleidoscope of divine activity; and it is the dreams that unite this pattern. The progenitive activity of the Holy Spirit (1:8) is made known to Joseph in a dream (1:18), which also reveals how the circumstances of that activity fulfill prophecy (1:22-23). In addition to this

¹³⁸See Chapter Two.

prophecy, dreams also prompt actions that fulfill other prophecies (2:15, 23). The magi who perceive the significance of the star (2:2, 9) also receive a dream that warns against Herod's plot (2:12). The *genesis* of Jesus (1:1, 18) is nothing less than an act of God, and dreams play a central role in mediating this divine activity.

Dreams as theological acts serve two features of Matthew's portrait of Jesus: Jesus as ruler/king and Jesus as "God with us." The titles of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew are helpful indicators in interpreting Matthew's portrait of Jesus, but the narrative presentation is what puts "flesh and blood" on the skeletal titles.¹³⁹ The importance of Jesus as "Christ" and "Son of David" (1:1) with their royal, kingly connotations has been noted by scholars,¹⁴⁰ but it is the narrative of Matt 1–2 and the perspective of the authorial audience that constructs a context in which this royal identity is first communicated. The encomiastic pattern of chapter 1 and the cultural hypotext of the threat and rescue of a royal child in chapter 2 are familiar in texts that narrate the beginnings of great rulers and kings, and dreams are an essential element in both cases in Matthew's Gospel. The divinatory nature of dreams invests the narrative of Jesus' beginning with a sense divine destiny and providence, which

¹³⁹See Leander E. Keck, "Toward a Renewal of New Testament Theology," *NTS* 32 (1986): 362-377, who seeks to correct biblical studies obsession with christological titles and argues for a more content oriented approach to NT christology.

¹⁴⁰Cf. Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity International Press, 2001), 57-74.

in turn underscores Jesus' authority and power. This authority is most fully realized at the end of the Gospel when the resurrected Jesus declares, "All authority (ἐξουσία) in heaven and upon the earth has been given to me" (28:18).

The divinatory nature of dreams also contributes to the identity of Jesus as "God with us." Not only is this knowledge of Jesus revealed in a dream (1:18b-25), but it is also portrayed in the dreams of Matt 2. The dreams of Matt 2 are divine interventions that consistently protect the threatened child Jesus. As such, the dreams confirm for the reader the identity of Jesus as "God with us" by first demonstrating that God is with Jesus. At the end of Matthew's Gospel, the dream of Pilate's wife becomes an important indication of God's presence with Jesus as he stands alone before Pilate, having been betrayed (26:48), deserted (26:56), and denied (26:69ff) by his disciples. As Pilate sits upon the judgment seat (τό βήμα; 27:19), the dream of Pilate's wife serves as Jesus' divine advocacy and signifies the divine judgment that Jesus is innocence/righteous (δικαίος; 27:19). Dreams are one means of how the unseen yet very present character of God is manifested in Matthew's portrait of Jesus as "God with us."

Thus, the significance of dreams in Matthew's portrait of Jesus is the way in which dreams as a literary convention contribute to the theological dimension of Matthew's christological narrative.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that the dreams of Matthew's Gospel correspond to the form and function of dreams found in other Greco-Roman narratives. With their standard compositional pattern and familiar narrative functions, dreams represent a literary convention in Greco-Roman literature, and the Matthean dreams aptly exemplify this literary tradition. Given this conventional character of dreams, an ancient audience would have certain expectations about how dreams are narrated and how dreams contribute to the narrative itself. An ancient audience hearing Matthew's Gospel would certainly find that the dreams in his *bios* of Jesus meet those literary expectations. An ancient audience would also bring to the reading of Matthew's dreams a belief in the divinatory nature of dreams. This perspective contributes to a theological function of dreams in Matthew's portrait of Jesus.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This dissertation has offered a reading of the dreams in the Gospel of Matthew as authorial audience, seeking to understand how an ancient audience would “make sense” of the Matthean dreams given the larger social and literary contexts of dreams in antiquity. This concluding chapter will summarize the research and results of this reading and will outline implications for further research.

Summary of Research and Results

Reading the Matthean dreams as the authorial audience requires an understanding of the social and literary character of dreams in the Greco-Roman world. Chapter Two described this social context of dreams by considering the social function of dreams and the intellectual tradition about the theory and classification of dreams. In the Greco-Roman world, dreams were understood as a form of divination and so were part of the religious experience and practice of that time. In addition to divinatory practices in general, dreams were also associated with magic and cultic activities – healings, incubation, the establishment of altars and cults, votive offerings, and dream interpreters. Because not all dreams proved to be significant (divinatory), there developed

theories and classifications of dreams by professional dream interpreters and philosophical traditions. In general, however, the belief and value associated with dreams were one of divine origin and purpose. Dreams were understood as a means by which the divine enters human affairs in order to bring about the divine will. Thus, an ancient audience would bring to the reading of Matthew's dreams a presupposition that dreams signify the activity and intervention of the divine. This perspective revealed a theological function of dreams in Matthew's portrait of Jesus.

In addition to describing the social function of dreams, this dissertation also explored the literary dimension of dreams (Chapters Three and Four), which proved to be most beneficial for my reading of the Matthean dreams (Chapter Five). I referred to this literary character of dreams as the "script of dreams;" that is, there is a "script" (form) to how one narrates or reports dreams in ancient literature, and at the same time dreams could be adapted, or "scripted," for a range of literary functions. Chapter Three analyzed dreams as a literary convention by noting (1) the literary form of a dream report, (2) the rhetoric of dreams, and (3) the inventiveness of dreams. As a literary convention in ancient literature, dreams are narrated according to a predictable compositional pattern, which creates a level of expectation for readers. As Chapter Five demonstrated, the narration of dreams in the Gospel of Matthew corresponds to this literary form, fulfilling the expectations of Matthew's authorial audience. It was also argued that Robert Gnuse's thesis that Matthew's dreams are modeled upon the

dream reports of Genesis is untenable. A comparison with dream reports in Greco-Roman literature reveals Matthew's utilization of this conventional literary form.

The literary character of dreams was also investigated by considering how dreams are treated in the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, especially the compositional exercises known as the progymnasmata. In several of these texts, dreams are presented as a motif used to develop the birth *topos* of an encomium. The encomium pattern is evident in Matt 1 with a genealogy and an account of the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth, which not only includes a dream but is presented in a dream report proper (Matt 1:18b-25). Once again, an ancient audience would recognize the encomiastic pattern of Matt 1 and would find the dream a familiar motif in developing this literary-rhetorical convention.

Dreams as a literary convention was also investigated by exploring the inventiveness of dreams. Ancient sources reveal that dreams were often invented for rhetorical and literary purposes. Although the historicity of reported dreams in ancient literature remains an open question, the inventiveness of dreams does highlight the creative and embellishing aspects of the *literary representation* of dreams. In investigating this creative dimension of literary dreams, two features in scripting dreams were present in Matthew's dreams. First, it was proposed that the dreams of Matt 2:12 and 2:13-15 could be read as a double-dream report. The double-dream report is an amplification of the dream report in which two dreams create either a "circumstance of

mutuality” for the two dreamers or a “circumstance of benefit” for a third party. The literary effect of the double-dream report is a more sophisticated and engaging literary device for plot development. The dreams of Matt 2:12 and 2:13-15 most likely reflect this literary tradition. The other literary feature of dreams represented in the Matthean dreams is the presence of a literary quote or allusion. Dream reports in Greco-Roman literature sometimes included quotes or allusions of Homer; the Jewish tradition of reporting dreams includes quotes or allusion to the Jewish scriptures. In the first Matthean dream report (1:18b-25), Matthew quotes Isa 7:14 as part of the dream message. Though the quote is the scriptural prophecy fulfilled in the circumstances of Jesus’ birth, it also corresponds to the custom of dream reports containing literary quotes.

The functions of the Matthean dreams also correspond to how dreams function in other Greco-Roman narratives. In terms of common motifs or themes associated with dreams, the Matthean dreams signify the future greatness of an individual at his birth, provide protection, occur in relation to a person’s death, and often occur in relation to prophecies or oracles. In terms of plot and character, the dreams of Matthew’s Gospel occur at critical moments, prompt plot development, and contribute to characterization.

This research demonstrates Matthew’s use of a conventional literary device and provides one illustration of how the First Gospel participates in the literary praxis of its time. Reading Matthew’s dream in light of its Greco-Roman

literary context also provides a more nuanced interpretation of these dreams that has not been observed by other interpreters.

Implications for Further Research

This study of dreams in the Gospel of Matthew has several implications for further research. First, an interpretation of Matt 1–2 would be enhanced by giving more attention to the ancient practice of divination. Dreams represent only one form of divination in Matt 1–2; there is also the presence of prophecy/oracles and astrology. This constellation of divinatory practices becomes even more intriguing when one considers that Hans-Josef Klauck's *The Religious Context of Early Christianity* includes a chapter on popular religion that discusses dreams, astrology, and oracles.¹ Such an awareness of this *religious* context certainly intensifies the sense of divine activity in Matthew's account of Jesus' beginnings. In a similar vein, additional study is needed on the connection between the dream of Pilate's wife and the other omens surrounding the death of Jesus – daytime darkness, temple veil destroyed, and earthquake. These other incidents are usually considered separately from the dream of Pilate's wife, but as in the case of other illustrious persons in antiquity dreams were one omen among others that were associated with their deaths.

¹Klauck, Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (trans. Brian McNeil; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), ch. 3.

Second, this study of dreams has profited from an analysis of the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition, particularly the progymnasmata. Though George A. Kennedy stated that “Of the four Gospels, Matthew’s makes the widest use of all aspects of rhetoric,”² the First Gospel has not received the kind of rhetorical analyses from which Markan and Lukan studies have benefited. For example, a study of the dream of Pilate’s wife has revealed a comparison of characters – Judas, Pilate, and the Jewish leaders. This comparison should be studied in light of the rhetorical technique of *synkrisis*, which is a comparison of persons, actions, or things, either good or bad. Most often these comparisons are not of persons or actions that are different but that are similar, so that the noble or ignoble quality can be highlighted.³

And thirdly, our analysis of dreams in Matt 1 – 2 revealed the Gospel of Matthew’s participation in common literary conventions, which includes not only dreams but also the encomiastic pattern of Matt 1 and the cultural hypotext of Matt 2. These literary practices suggest a shaping of the traditions of Jesus that engages its Greco-Roman milieu. On a smaller scale, we see in the Gospel of Matthew the same kind of literary activity that characterized much of Judaism during the Hellenistic age. Erich Gruen describes this literary enterprise as follows:

²George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 101.

³Cf. Theon, *Progym.* 10 (Kennedy, 52-55).

Jews engaged actively with the traditions of Hellenas, adapting genres and transforming legends to articulate their own legacy in modes congenial to a Hellenistic setting. At the same time they recreated their past, retold stories in different shapes, and amplified the scriptural corpus itself through the medium of the Greek language and Greek literary forms. In a world where Hellenic culture held an ascendant position, Jews strained to develop their own cultural self-definition, one that would give them a place within the broader Mediterranean world and would also establish their distinctiveness."⁴

The Gospel of Matthew needs to be read within this larger context of the Mediterranean world and within the emerging self-definition of early Christianity,⁵ giving attention to how literary strategies and conventions of the First Gospel negotiate these two contexts.⁶ I hope that my research, which reveals Matthew's participation in the literary practices of his day, can in some small way contribute to this awareness and appreciation of how Matthew configures the traditions of Jesus in the context of the Greco-Roman world.

⁴Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), xv.

⁵Attention to Christian self-definition in no way negates the more general Jewish identity of early Christianity. For a model of first century Judaism that includes early Christianity as a form of Judaism, see Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), ch. 1.

⁶We see the benefit of this kind of perspective with Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2001); and John Riches and David C. Sim, eds., *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (JSNTSup 276; London: T&T Clark International, 2005).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Matthean Transfiguration as a Dream-Vision Report?

The Matthean Transfiguration as a Dream-Vision Report?

The Gospel of Matthew is the only canonical Gospel that refers to the transfiguration event as a “vision” (ὄραμα, 17:9). This description creates an understanding of the transfiguration as a visionary experience like dreams. It is important to recognize that in the Greco-Roman world dreams and visions represent very similar phenomena that occur either while one is asleep (dream) or awake (vision). This recognition is evidenced on a funerary altar of a priestess in Thyatira, which has the following inscription: “If anyone wishes to learn the truth from me let him pray at this altar for what he wishes and he will obtain it through a vision of the night or day (διάδράματος νυκτός καὶ ἡμέρας).”¹ The professional dream interpreter Artemidorus states that “there is no difference between apparitions that occur during the day and those that appear in a dream, for they predict the same thing.”² The resemblance of dreams and waking visions is also evidenced by their literary representation. Hence, in his discussion of the literary form of dreams and vision, John H. Hanson uses the term “dream-vision” report for the narration of visionary experiences because of

¹Cited in Gil H. Renberg, “‘Commanded By the Gods’: An Epigraphical Study of Dreams and Visions in Greek and Roman Religious Life” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 2003). 258.

²Artemidorus, *Onir.* 3.28 (White). Cf. also comments and references by F. T. van Straten, “Daikrates’ Dream: A Votive Relief from Kos, and some other kat’onar dedications,” *Bulletin antieke Beschaving* 51 (1976): 14.

“the difficulty, if not impossibility, of distinguishing [literarily] between a dream and a vision.”³ Hanson continues,

Experience, apparently, either confirms or underlies this fluidity, since the ancients themselves could not always distinguish between waking and sleeping in connection with the dream-vision phenomenon. In short, as far as form or content is concerned, dreams and visions cannot readily be separated on the basis of the evidence. The rather rigid modern distinction between the terms dreams (a sleeping phenomenon) and vision (a waking phenomenon) is not paralleled in antiquity, because dreams and visions were narrated in the same manner.⁴

Thus, Matthew’s designation ὄραμα for the transfiguration invites a consideration of the transfiguration in Matthew (17:1-9) as a dream-vision report.⁵ The following is not a full interpretation of the Matthean transfiguration but seeks to be suggestive in how this literary unit contains the formal features of a vision narrative.

³John S. Hanson, “Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 23.2: 1408.

⁴Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1408-1409. For other researchers who have reached the same conclusion, see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 116 and 125 n. 31; Klaus Burger, “Visionsberichte Formgeschichtliche Bemerkungen über pagane hellenistische Texte und ihre frühchristlichen Analogien,” in *Studien und Texte zur Formgeschichte* (ed. K. Berger, F. Vouga, M. Wolter, and D. Zeller; TANZ 7; Tübingen: Francke, 1992), 177-225, esp. 204; Shaul Bar, *A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible* (HUCM 25; trans. Lenn J. Schramm; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001), 7.

⁵Though he does not demonstrate it, Hanson also believes the transfiguration represents a dream-vision report: “[T]he transfiguration scene may also properly be understood as a dream-vision report” (“Dreams and Visions,” 1422).

The Form of the Transfiguration

We begin by appropriating Bruce Chilton's assessment of the transfiguration as exhibiting both a generic structure and a narrative structure.⁶ Chilton understands the transfiguration as a blending of a divine voice story (*bat qôl*) with the narrative elements of Exodus 24, Moses' experience on Mt. Sinai. The "generic structure" is the heavenly voice story (*bat qôl*), while the "narrative structure" is modeled upon Exodus 24. Although these two structures are inseparable in the narration of the transfiguration, it is helpful to consider these two components separately.

Instead of a *bat qôl* story,⁷ the generic structure of the transfiguration is best understood according to Matthew's own designation: τὸ ὄραμα ("the vision"; 17:9). As such, we would expect it to conform to the dream-vision report found in the literature of the ancient Mediterranean world. Indeed, Matthew shows his familiarity with this literary form in narrating dreams in the infancy narratives (1:18b-25; 2:13-15, 19-21). Thus, a reader of Matthew's Gospel is already predisposed to this literary convention. The formal features of the

⁶Bruce D. Chilton, "Transfiguration," *ABD* 6:640-642.

⁷Chilton's identification of the transfiguration as a *bat qôl* story is based on the rabbinic designation of a heavenly or divine voice that communicates the divine will. There is more to the transfiguration, however, than the voice from heaven; there is also the appearance of Moses and Elijah. Moreover, a Greco-Roman audience also is familiar with a divine voice (Cf. Plutarch, *Ages.* 6.5, *Demetr.* 4.3; Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.105-106; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.55.3; Cicero, *Div.* 1.24; Aristides, *Orat.* 50.6; cited in Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1412 n. 70).

dream-vision narrative are as follows: (1) *scene-setting*, which may include (a) identification of the dreamer-visionary, (b) place, (c) time, and/or (d) mental state of the dreamer; (2) the *dream-vision proper*, which consists of three types: (a) visitant, (b) symbolic, or (c) auditory; (3) the *reaction* of the dreamer-visionary, which can include waking, amazement, perplexity, fear, etc.; and (4) the *response* of the dreamer-visionary, which is the action that the dreamer-visionary performs as a consequence of the dream-vision experience. A close reading of Matthew's transfiguration scene reveals the presence of these formal features.

The *scene-setting* (17:1) of the transfiguration narrative is provided by an identification of the recipients of the vision (Peter, James, and John)⁸, the place ("a high mountain," ὄρος ὑψηλόν), and the time ("after six days"). It is also noted that they were "by themselves" (κατ' ἰδίαν). In ancient times, mountains are known as being places of visions and other liminal experiences,⁹ and these visionary experiences often take place in a time of seclusion. E. R. Dodds notes three particular instances of visions that "all occurred in lonely mountainous places, Hesiod's on Helicon, Philippiades' on the savage pass of Mount Parthenion, Pindar's during a thunderstorm in the mountains."¹⁰ References to a

⁸The scene will soon show that it is the disciples, not Jesus, who are the recipients of the vision.

⁹K. C. Hanson, "Transformed on the Mountain," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 148-170.

¹⁰Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 117. For these instances, see respectively Hesiod, *Theog.* 22ff; Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.105; Aristodermus, *apud* Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 3.79 (137).

“high mountain” and being “by themselves” would shape the expectations of an ancient audience to read the subsequent narrative as a visionary account.

The *dream-vision proper* appears to be a combination of the symbolic vision and the auditory vision: the appearance of Moses and Elijah (17:3) and the voice from the cloud (17:5). Whereas a visitant dream-vision (the first type) is the appearance of a dream figure that speaks, the symbolic dream-vision simply describes a scene or set of occurrences. The scene may have divine or human figures, but they are not as direct or central as in the visitant dream-vision. The appearance of Moses and Elijah to the disciples¹¹ represents this type of dream-vision. Moses and Elijah do not speak to the disciples, and although they are said to converse with Jesus, their presence contributes symbolically to the dream-vision narrative.¹² The disciples, however, are spoken to by a voice from the

¹¹It is a vision to the disciples: “And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them speaking to [Jesus]” (καὶ ἰδοὺ ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ηλίας συλλαλοῦντες μετ’ αὐτοῦ; 17:3).

¹²It is interesting to note that in Greco-Roman literature it is common for dead people to appear in dreams or visions (Homer, *Il.* 23; Sophocles, *El.* 410-425; Euripides, *Hec.* 1-97, *Orest.* 618-20, *Alc.* 349-56; Aeschylus, *Eum.* 94-104; Ennius, *Annales* 32-48; Cicero, *Republ.* 6.14.14ff; Virgil, *Aen.* 1.341-72, 2.264-60, 5.705-39; [as cited in Flannery-Daily, “Standing at the Heads of Dreamers,” 373 n. 120]), but it is quite uncommon in Jewish literature. The only other example in Jewish literature is 2 Macc 15:12-16, where Nicanor dreams that the deceased high priest Onias (cf. 3:1-40) prays on behalf of Nicanor and his army; the prophet Jeremiah then appears to encourage Nicanor.

cloud.¹³ This phenomenon corresponds to the auditory dream-vision. Hanson describes this type of dream-vision as follows:

This type of dream-vision narrative is often referred to as an audition, and is thus distinguished from a dream or vision. But like the terms theophany and angelophany, audition is a designation that is of dubious value. They all refer to what is called in this study a dream-vision proper. It may be suggested that whether a god or angel appears, whether words are only heard and no dream figure appears, when the elements of the full form are present, the narrative should be described as a dream-vision report. It should be noted that not only did no specific terminology for auditions develop, but that even where the dream-vision proper is only auditory visual terminology prevails.¹⁴

In terms of a combination of a symbolic vision and an auditory vision, Acts 10:9-16 and Exodus 3:1ff (LXX) provide parallels. In Acts 10, Peter has a symbolic vision of a large sheet coming down with all kinds of creatures upon it (10:11-12); he then hears a voice¹⁵ telling him to “kill and eat.” (10:13). After Peter’s refusal, the voice comes again saying, “What God has cleansed you will not call profane” (10:15). In Exodus 3, Moses see a vision: “an angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] (ὄφθη δὲ αὐτῷ ἄγγελος κυρίου) in the flame of a fire out of a bush Moses, and he saw that the fire was burning but the bush was not being consumed” (3:2 [LXX]). After approaching the bush, Moses then hears the

¹³“And behold, there was a voice from the cloud (φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης) saying, ‘This one is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’” (17:5).

¹⁴Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1411. Hanson lists the following examples of audio dream-visions: Cicero, *Div.* 1.24; Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.105-106; Plutarch, *Demetr.* 4.3; Josephus, *A.J.* 20.8-19; and Aristides, *Or.* 50.6. See also *T. Job* 42.1 and Diogenes Laertius 1.115.2.

¹⁵“And a voice came to him” (καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ πρὸς αὐτόν; 10:13).

Lord call to him (3:4). It is interesting to note that both the visionary experiences of Acts 10 and Exod 3 are referred to as a vision (ὄραμα; Acts 10:17, Exod 3:3). In a similar way, the dream-vision proper of the transfiguration contains both the visual appearance of Moses and Elijah and an audible voice from the cloud.

The final feature of the dream-vision report is the *reaction/response* of the dreamer-visionary. In the transfiguration episode there is a *response* to the appearance of Moses and Elijah and a *reaction* to the voice from the cloud. In response to the appearance of Moses and Elijah conversing with the transfigured Jesus, Peter says to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents (σκηνάς) here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (17:4). A comparison with Mark and Luke shows that Matthew omits the negative assessment of Peter’s statement. Mark reads, “For he did not know what he should say, for they were quite fearful” (9:6); while Luke states, “not knowing what he was saying” (9:33). Several commentators seem to read Mark’s and Luke’s negative evaluation of Peter’s statement into Matthew’s account.¹⁶ An ancient audience, however, might find Peter’s response consistent with experiences of dreams or visions. In Chapter 2, it was noted that a number of inscriptions bear witness to the dedication of a temple or setting up an altar in

¹⁶John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 703, is illustrative: “Peter’s attempt to participate in what he sees is inappropriate.” See also, Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word, 1995), 493; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 2:207; 700; David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 184.

response to a dream or vision.¹⁷ In Jewish tradition, this kind of response is best known from the patriarch Jacob. In Genesis 28:10-22, Jacob has a dream in which he sees a ladder that reaches to heaven and hears God speaking. He responds to the dream by setting up a sacred pillar (στήλη, 28:18 [LXX]), pouring oil on it, and making a vow. He calls the place Bethel, which becomes an important sanctuary in ancient Israel. Something similar takes place with Isaac and the sanctuary of Beer-sheba (Gen 26:23-25). The Lord appears to Isaac at night and reiterates the promise first made to Abraham; Isaac responds by building an altar (θυσιαστήριον; 26:25 [LXX]). Peter's willingness to make "tents" (σκηνάς) in response to the vision may represent this kind of gesture.¹⁸ The term σκηνή has cultic associations in both Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions.¹⁹ Peter's response to the appearance of Moses and Elijah is an eagerness to honor the revered figures of Israel's heritage and the now transfigured Jesus who speaks with them.

¹⁷Cf. *IPergamon* VII.2, 295 (Renberg, Cat. No. 356); ¹⁷ *IG IV² 1*, 561 (Renberg, Cat. No. 44); *IG IV² 1*, 513 (Renberg, Cat. No. 51); *IG IV² 1*, 386 (Renberg, Cat. No. 46); Hugo Hepding, "Die Arbeiten zu Pergamon 1908-1909, II: Die Inschriften," *AM* 35 (1910), 359-360 (Renberg, Cat. No. 352 and 353).

¹⁸Though he reads Peter's statement negatively and does not draw on the material that I have provided, cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 493: "[Peter] proposes to put up τρεῖς σκηνάς, lit. 'three tents,' probably little huts made of branches, not for providing the hospitality of overnight lodging or to prolong the experience but possible as a kind of honorary gesture, a commemoration of this remarkable event, i.e., three shrines or holy places, similar to the OT tent shrine itself, which would symbolize the remarkable communion between heaven and earth represented by these three figures."

¹⁹BDAG 928a-b; and Liddel & Scott (9th ed.) 1608a.

While Peter is making this proposal to Jesus,²⁰ a voice from the cloud interrupts with a statement and a command: “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (17:5).” The *reaction* of the disciples is described as “being greatly afraid” (ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα; 17:6). Fear is a common motif in the *reaction* feature of the dream-vision report,²¹ and an ancient audience would find the disciples’ fear a common reaction to the visionary experience.

Thus, the generic structure of the transfiguration is a dream-vision report, a literary convention with which an ancient audience would be familiar. The transfiguration account, however, also contains what Chilton calls a narrative structure.

The narrative structure of the transfiguration is based on Exodus 24 and 34. A comparison of Matthew’s transfiguration with Exodus 24 and 34 reveals that the story of the transfiguration is cast in the narrative imagery of the Sinai event. Consider the following associations: mountain (Ex. 24:12, 15; 34:3; Mt. 17:1); after six days (Ex. 24:16; Mt. 17:1); Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu join Moses just as Peter, James, and John join Jesus (Ex. 24:1, 9; Mt. 17:1); a cloud overshadows the mountain (Ex. 24:15; 34:5; Mt. 17:5); a voice speaks from the

²⁰Note the genitive absolute, ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος (17:5).

²¹Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.34 (“greatly dreaded the dream” [καταρρωδήσας τὸν ὄνειρον]); 1.107 (“he feared the vision” [διδουκῶς τὴν ὄψιν]); 3.30 (“fears for himself”) [δείσας περὶ ἑωυτοῦ]); 7.14 (“being greatly afraid” [περιδεής γενόμενος]); and Josephus, *Ant.* 20.19 (“being troubled” [ταραχθείς]).

cloud (Ex. 24:15,16; Mt. 17:5); and the radiance of Moses and Jesus (Ex. 34:29-30,35; Mt. 17:2).²²

This narrative recasting is perhaps best described by what Vernon Robbins calls “reconfiguration.” As a part of his socio-rhetorical method, Robbins discusses the various ways in which texts may appropriate other texts. Robbins refers to reconfiguration as one way this appropriation takes place. He states,

Reconfiguration is recounting a situation in a manner that makes the later event “new” in relation to the previous event. Because the new event is similar to a previous event, the new event replaces or “outshines” the previous event, making the previous event a “foreshadowing” of the more recent one.²³

Thus, as a reconfiguration of Exodus 24 and 34, the narrative structure of the transfiguration is presented as a new Sinai experience. The focus of this narrative structure, however, is not on the giving of the law and commandments but on the persons of Moses and Jesus. As a matter of fact, references to the law and commandments (Ex. 24:12-14) are absent in the transfiguration; and as Chilton observes, Exodus 24 in its narrative context simply functions as a

²²See Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 243-244; and Chilton, “Transfiguration,” 6:640-641.

²³Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 50.

preamble to the succeeding divine instruction.²⁴ The effect of the reconfiguration of this introductory material, however, is the unambiguous presentation of the Mosaic character of Jesus, a presentation that Matthew accentuates in his redaction of Mark's transfiguration. These redactions include changing Mark's "there appeared to them Elijah with Moses" (9:4) to "Moses and Elijah appeared to them" (17:3), thus emphasizing the presence of Moses. Matthew adds "his face shone like the sun" (17:2), which is reminiscent of Exodus 24:29: "the skin of his face shone." This reference to shining like the sun seems to reflect a tradition about Moses' radiance, for Philo says that Moses' "countenance shone like the light of the sun."²⁵

Having dealt separately with the generic structure and the narrative structure of the transfiguration, we can now see how the vision form of the transfiguration promotes the Moses typology of the narrative structure. The meaning of the appearance of Moses and Elijah is ambiguous, which is characteristic of symbolic dream-visions. Hanson states, "Since the [symbolic] dream-vision proper generally requires interpretation, its meaning can initially seem to less apparent."²⁶ Davies and Allison list no less than twelve

²⁴ Chilton, "Transfiguration," 6:641.

²⁵ Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.70. For other sources giving witness to this tradition, see Allison, *The New Moses*, 244.

²⁶ Hanson, "Dreams and Visions," 1412.

interpretations of what Moses and Elijah might represent.²⁷ The unambiguous voice from the cloud, however, may help in interpreting the presence of Moses and Elijah.

The voice from the cloud states, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα· ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ; 17:5). There is both a statement and a command. The statement is identical to what the voice says at Jesus’ baptism (3:17), and it echoes both Ps 2:7, a royal psalm, and Isa 42:1, the suffering servant of the Lord. The command, however, is also important, for auditory dream-visions “most often constitute a command.”²⁸ It is a direct allusion to Deut. 18:15 (LXX) concerning the prophet like Moses: “The Lord your God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers; you shall listen to him” (αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε). The Deuteronomy passage goes on to say of the prophet like Moses that “I will put the words in his mouth, and he will speak to them whatever I command him. And whatever person does not listen to whatever that prophet speaks in my name, I will punish him” (18:18-19, [LXX]). The voice from the cloud signifies that Jesus fulfills the expectation of the prophet like Moses.²⁹ Thus, both the generic structure and the narrative structure of

²⁷Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 2:698.

²⁸Hanson, “Dreams and Visions,” 1411.

²⁹A messianic expectation of the prophet like Moses is evident in the Dead Sea Scroll 4Q175, which is a *testimonia* of messianic proof-texts. Interestingly, the

Matthew's transfiguration story present Jesus as a new Moses, particularly the fulfillment of the prophet like Moses.

The Mosaic connection of Jesus is further implied by the following pericope (17:9-13), which explicitly identifies the coming of Elijah with John the Baptist. The ministry of Jesus (the prophet like Moses), which is inaugurated by the ministry of John the Baptist (Elijah), is a fulfillment of all the eschatological expectations associated with these two figures.³⁰ In this case, Matthew's appearance of "Moses and Elijah"³¹ also corroborates his statement that Jesus has not "come to abolish the law or the prophets . . . but to fulfill" (5:17).

In summary, the literary form of the transfiguration in Matthew's Gospel is a dream-vision report whose narrative content is a reconfiguration of Exodus 24 and 34. This narrative reconfiguration casts Jesus in a Moses typology. This Mosaic role of Jesus is further defined by the voice from the cloud, which denotes that Jesus fulfills the expectation of the prophet like Moses. This formal analysis of the transfiguration provides a basis for discerning the function of the transfiguration in Matthew's Gospel.

text represents an expectation of a messiah(s) as a prophet like Moses, a royal *scion* of David, and a high priest. The voice from the cloud indicates that Jesus is a royal son of David, a suffering servant, and a prophet like Moses.

³⁰ Cf. Mal 4:5-6.

³¹ Cf. Mark's description of the vision appearance as "Elijah with Moses" (' Ηλίας σὺν Μωϋσεῖ; 9:4).

The Function of the Transfiguration

At the macro-level of Matthew's Gospel, the transfiguration contributes to the overall scheme of presenting Jesus as a new Moses.³² The transfiguration, however, also functions within its immediate narrative context. Once again, the vision form provides a clue as to how the transfiguration functions in Matthew's Gospel. It is important to note that the disciples were the recipients of the transfiguration vision. As recipients of the vision, the function of the transfiguration ought to be seen in relation to them.³³

The immediate narrative context of the transfiguration begins with Peter's confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16). Jesus immediately gives his first prediction of his suffering, death, and resurrection (16:21). Peter's response, however, is one of rebuke (16:22); his christological confession is at odds with Jesus' inevitable suffering. Then Jesus teaches about the true nature of discipleship, which entails taking up their own crosses and following his way of suffering (16:24-26). At this point, the transfiguration vision takes place (17:1-9). Except for the redactional changes in the transfiguration story, Matthew has followed Mark's narrative closely.

After the transfiguration, however, Matthew significantly changes his portrayal of the disciples in relation to Jesus' passion predictions. In response to

³²This new Moses typology in the Gospel of Matthew has been reasonably demonstrated by Allison's *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*.

³³Cf. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 699: "Everything is focused on what the chosen disciples are privileged to witness."

the second passion prediction, Mark says that the disciples “did not understand and were afraid to ask him” (9:32). Moreover, Mark immediately narrates how the disciples were arguing with one another about who was the greatest (9:33-34). Matthew, on the other hand, says that the disciples “were greatly distressed” when Jesus predicted his passion for the second time (17:23). Moreover, Matthew does not narrate the argument among the disciples, but he has the disciples come to Jesus and ask, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (18:1)? In Matthew’s Gospel, the second passion prediction does not generate misunderstanding nor fear; the disciples simply grieve at the prospect of Jesus’ fate. Also, the disciples do not argue among themselves but ask Jesus for his teaching about greatness in the kingdom of heaven.

In Mark, the third passion prediction (10:32-34) is followed by James and John’s request to sit on the left and right of Jesus when he comes into his glory (10:35-37). In Matthew’s Gospel, however, this request is not made by James and John but by their mother (20:20-21). Matthew has shifted the imperceptive request from the two disciples who experienced the transfiguration vision to their mother. Before the transfiguration in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus’ prediction of suffering and death is met with rebuke; but after the transfiguration, the disciples “listen to him” and are able to understand Jesus’ suffering as part of his messianic mission. Thus, the transfiguration vision functions within Matthew’s Gospel to enlighten and enable the disciples in their following Jesus.

In summary, the transfiguration vision confirms the disciples' understanding of Jesus as the Son of the living God ("this is my beloved Son"), but it also intimates that Jesus is the suffering servant ("in whom I am well pleased"). These disciples needed something outside themselves in order to develop as disciples. The revelation that Jesus is the prophet like Moses whose words must be heard is a divine gift to the disciples. Without the vision, they would not be able to hear and understand Jesus' passion predictions, nor could they understand the nature of their own discipleship. Thus, the transfiguration functions as an act of grace. Such an understanding of Matthew's transfiguration corresponds to Charles Talbert's thesis that the Gospel of Matthew is not legalistic.³⁴ Talbert argues that Matthew's imperatives are controlled by Matthew's indicatives. Over against the Gospel of Mark, the transfiguration event is an indicative event that develops the character of the disciples, a development that is explicitly perceived in relation to Jesus' passion predictions.

Conclusion

This appendix has set forth an interpretation of the transfiguration in the Gospel of Matthew based on Matthew's own designation: a vision (ὄραμα, 17:9). As a vision, the transfiguration corresponds to the conventional literary pattern of a dream-vision report, a literary form that would have been familiar to an

³⁴Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5 – 7* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2004; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 32-43.

ancient audience. The dream-vision report constitutes what Chilton calls the generic structure of the transfiguration account. The transfiguration also has a narrative structure, which is reconfiguration of Exodus 24 and 34. The transfiguration functions at two levels. First, it contributes to the Mosaic characterization of Jesus, particularly as “the prophet like Moses.” Second, the transfiguration functions to develop the character of the disciples within Matthew’s narrative. The transfiguration vision enlightens the three disciples in order that they may comprehend the suffering aspect of Jesus’ mission.

APPENDIX B

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November 7, 2006

Dr. Mikeal C. Parsons, editor
Perspectives in Religious Studies
Department of Religion
Baylor University
1311 S. 5th
P. O. Box 97284
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Dear Dr. Parsons,

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Baylor University entitled "Reading Dreams: An Audience-Critical Approach to the Dreams in the Gospel of Matthew." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation portions from the following:

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Sincerely,

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Date: 11/08/06

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