

## BELLARIA (XIV)



*Morpheus, god of sleep and dreams, by Jean-Bernard (appropriately) Restout (1732-1791)*

### ARTEMIDORUS: THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS (4)

*Artemidorus from Daldis, near Ephesus, writing c. AD 200, composed his Interpretation of Dreams (Oneirokritika in Greek) in five books, showing the beginner how it should be done. This run of Bellaria will introduce supporters of Classics for All to this enthusiastic hero of the genre.*

*Note: ‘Hammond ID’ refers to Martin Hammond, The Interpretation of Dreams (Oxford World’s Classics, 2020).*

*This and the next Bellaria will continue to draw on Peter Thonemann’s work (see Bellaria XI) to explore the fascinating picture of social life that emerges from Artemidorus in the Greek world of Asia Minor, under the Roman empire of Septimius Severus (AD 193-211). It goes without saying that these extracts can only hint at the riches contained in Thonemann’s wide-ranging analysis.*

## In sickness and in health

*Life in the ancient world was not sacrosanct. Since the survival of a society in the ancient world depended on women producing healthy children, of whom the men would be able to defend it and the women produce more healthy children, there was little sympathy for the ill, the crippled or the mentally deficient about whom effectively nothing could be done and who were felt to be nothing but a burden on society. In this respect, it was a very unforgiving world:*



*Sickness*



*Health*

In my observations **physical beauty, a handsome figure, and bodily strength** are auspicious for all alike, as long as these attributes do not exceed human norms, since to dream that one is preternaturally beautiful, handsomely built, or strong has the same outcome as dreaming that one is ugly, crippled, or enfeebled, all of which signify death for the sick, and for those in good health unemployment and chronic illness.

### **Hammond ID 1.50.8**

ἀγαθὸν δὲ ἐπίσης πᾶσιν ἐτήρησα τὸ κάλλος καὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος εὐφυΐαν καὶ τὴν ἰσχύν, ὅταν μὴ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἦ ταῦτα, ἐπεὶ τό γε ὑπερβαλλόντως καλὸν εἶναι δοκεῖν ἢ εὐπρεπῆ ἢ ἰσχυρὸν, ἐπίσης τῷ αἰσχροῦ εἶναι δοκεῖν, ἢ παραλελύσθαι, ἢ μὴ ἰσχύειν ἀποβαίνει. ἃ δὴ πάντα θάνατον μὲν τοῖς νοσοῦσιν, ἀπραγίαν δὲ καὶ μακρονοσίαν τοῖς ἐρρωμένοις, σημαίνει.

### **Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.50.8**

*And it gets worse: it was commonly assumed that any sort of physical disability implied moral failings too:*

To imagine that one has **the same physical symptoms** as any of one's acquaintances—for example a problem with the same foot or the same hand or any other part of the body, or generally the same disease or the same pain—signifies that one will also share the moral faults of the other. Diseases of the body and the crippling of any of its parts symbolize mental lack of control and irrational desires, so it stands to reason that anyone sharing the physical symptoms will also share the moral faults.

### Hammond ID 3.51

πάσχειν δὲ δοκεῖν τὰ αὐτὰ ἄλλω ὀφτινιοῦν γνωρίμῳ, οἷον τὸν αὐτὸν πόδα ἢ τὴν αὐτὴν χεῖρα ἢ ἄλλο τι μέρος τοῦ σώματος τὸ αὐτὸ πάσχειν, καὶ ὅλως συννοσεῖν ἢ συναλγεῖν, κοινωνῆσαι σημαίνει τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων ἐκεῖνῳ· τὰ μὲν γὰρ νοσήματα τοῦ σώματος, καὶ αἱ τῶν μερῶν πηρώσεις, εἰκόσασι ταῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀκολασίαις καὶ ἀλόγοις ἐπιθυμίαις, ὁ δὲ τὰ αὐτὰ πάσχων εἰκότως ἂν συνεξαμαρτάνοι.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 3.51

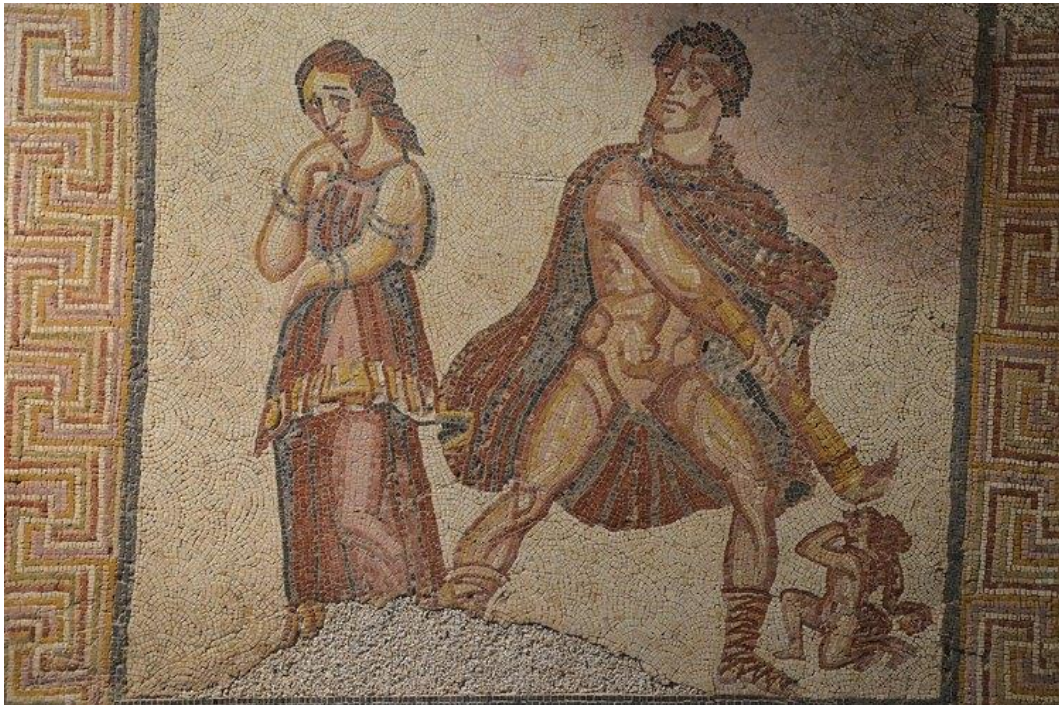
*The mentally deranged were pointed out in the streets and laughed at. Oddly, to dream of this could for some be a predictor of success, because it attracted attention to oneself:*

To dream of **being mad** is auspicious for those intent on some initiative—madmen let nothing stand in the way of whatever they have set their minds on. And it would be particularly auspicious for those who want to be political leaders of the masses and those who present themselves before a crowd: they will be thought that much more deserving of a popular reception. It is auspicious too for those who want to be teachers, because children also like following madmen. And the dream signifies that poor men will become more prosperous, because all give something to a madman. And for a sick person it foretells good health. This is because madness induces people to move around and walk about, and not take to their beds prostrate and inactive as sick people do: this movement is a sign of health.

### Hammond ID 3.42.1

μαίνεσθαι ἀγαθὸν τοῖς ἐπὶ τὸ πράττειν ὀρμῶσιν· ἀκόλυτοι γὰρ οἱ μαινόμενοι, ἐφ' ὃ τι ἂν ὀρμήσωσι. μάλιστα δ' ἂν εἴη ἀγαθὸν τοῖς δημαγωγεῖν, καὶ ὄχλου ἄρχειν βουλομένοις, καὶ τοῖς εἰς ὄχλον καθιεῖσιν ἑαυτούς· πλείονος γὰρ ἀποδοχῆς ἀξιοθήσονται. ἀγαθὸν δὲ καὶ τοῖς παιδεύειν βουλομένοις, ἐπειδὴ καὶ παῖδες τοῖς μαινομένοις ἀκολουθοῦσι. καὶ τοὺς πένητας εὐπορωτέρους ἔσεσθαι σημαίνει· παρὰ πάντων γὰρ ὁ μαινόμενος λαμβάνει. καὶ τῷ νοσοῦντι ὑγείαν προαγορεύει· κινεῖσθαι γὰρ καὶ περιπατεῖν ἢ μανία προάγεται, καὶ μὴ κατερρίφθαι καὶ μὴ ἡρεμεῖν ὡσπερ ἐν νόσῳ, ὅπερ ὑγείας ἐστὶ σύμβολον.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 3.42.1



*The madness of Hercules, about to kill his family*

*But one group of the disabled in Artemidorus' dream-topics were not subject to such treatment or prejudice: the blind. People were willing to help them in a number of different ways, perhaps because the mighty Homer was thought to have been blind, and blindness could be considered to give one special insight? However that may be, they feature frequently in Artemidorus, probably reflecting the widespread occurrence of eyesight loss or impairment:*

**2** But to dream of being **blind** is auspicious for someone in prison, and for someone forcibly held by others in extreme destitution. The first will no longer see the horror of his surroundings, and the second will have people to help him: a good number come forward to help a blind man, which gives him relief from his troubles...

**10** To imagine having **someone else's eyes** signifies that the dreamer will go blind, and someone else will lead him about by the hand.

**Hammond ID 1.26.2, 10**

**2** ἀγαθὸν δὲ τῷ ἐν δεσμοῖς ὄντι τὸ δοκεῖν τυφλοῦσθαι, καὶ τῷ βία ὑπὸ τινῶν κατεχομένῳ καὶ σφόδρα πενομένῳ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτι ὄψεται τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν κακά, ὁ δὲ ἔξει τοὺς ὑπηρετήσοντάς αὐτῷ· καὶ γὰρ τῷ τυφλῷ προσίασιν ὑπηρετήσοντες οὐκ ὀλίγοι, αὐτὸς τε τῶν πόνων ἀποπέπαιται...

**10** ἀλλοτρίους δὲ δοκεῖν ἔχειν ὀφθαλμοὺς τυφλὸν γενέσθαι σημαίνει, καὶ ὑπ' ἄλλου χειραγωγηθῆναι.

**Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.26.2, 10**

## Nature

*Artemidorus' account of the natural world was thoroughly instrumental: only what was useful to mankind was auspicious. His charming bird's-eye view of the landscape makes the distinction clearly enough:*

To dream of flying not very high above the earth nor too low, but just at the height from which one can clearly distinguish the features of the land, signifies travel somewhere abroad or a change of location. From what can be seen on the ground the dreamer can learn what sort of experience will meet him on his travels. So, for example, plains, ploughland, towns, villages, fields, all forms of human activity, lovely rivers, lakes, a calm sea, harbours, ships running before a fair wind—all these sights prophesy an auspicious time abroad. But glens, ravines, wooded valleys, rocks, wild animals, river torrents, mountains, cliffs—these foretell nothing but a malign experience of travel abroad.

### Hammond *ID* 2.68.4



*Corinth canal*

πέτεσθαι μήτε πολὺ τῆς γῆς ἀπέχοντα, μήτε αὖ ταπεινὸν σφόδρα, ἀλλ' ὡς δύνασθαι διαγινώσκειν τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ, ἀποδημίαν τινὰ καὶ μετανάστασιν σημαίνει. ἔξεστι δὲ μαθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν τῇ γῇ βλεπομένων ποταπά τινα τῷ ἰδόντι ἐν τῇ ἀποδημίᾳ ἀπαντήσει. οἷον πεδία μὲν καὶ ἄρουραι καὶ πόλεις καὶ κῶμαι καὶ ἄγροὶ καὶ πάντα τὰ ἀνθρώπων ἔργα, καὶ ποταμοὶ καλοὶ καὶ λίμναι καὶ θάλασσα εὐδῖος, καὶ ὄρμοι καὶ νῆες οὐριοδρομοῦσαι, ταῦτα πάντα βλεπόμενα ἀγαθὴν τὴν ἀποδημίαν μαντεύεται· ἄγκη δὲ καὶ φάραγγες καὶ νάπαι καὶ πέτραι καὶ θηρία, καὶ ποταμοὶ χεῖμαρροι καὶ ὄρη καὶ κρημνοί, πονηρὰ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῇ ἀποδημίᾳ προαγορεύουσιν.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 2.68.4

*The point about use is well made by Artemidorus' observations about trees:*

**Planes, black poplars, elms, beeches, ash-trees,** and all similar trees are advantageous only for people setting out to war, and for carpenters—for the former because weapons are made from their wood, and for the latter because carpenters' work depends on them. For others they are indicative of poverty and deprivation, because these trees bear no fruit.

### Hammond ID 2.25.3

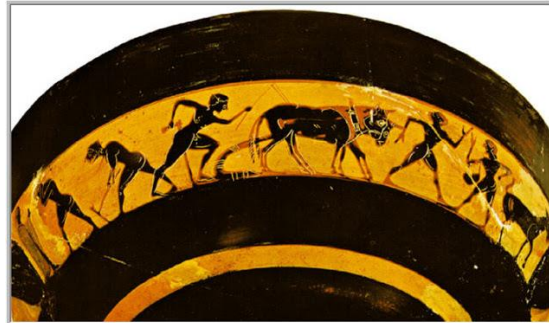
πλάτανοι καὶ αἴγειροι καὶ πελέαι καὶ ὄξυαι καὶ μελῖαι, καὶ πάντα τὰ ὅμοια, μόνοις τοῖς ἐπὶ πόλεμον ὀρμῶσι καὶ τεκτονικοῖς συμφέρει—τοῖς μὲν, διὰ τὸ ἐξ αὐτῶν γίνεσθαι ὄπλα, τοῖς δέ, διὰ τὴν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐργασίαν. τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς, διὰ τὸ ἄκαρπον, πενίας καὶ ἀπορίας ἐστὶ σημαντικά.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 2.25.3

*Not that living off the land was a bowl of cherries: far from it. Artemidorus' view of a farmer's life differs little from that of farmer Hesiod 900 years earlier.*

To **cultivate, sow, plant, or plough the land** is auspicious for those intending to marry and for those without children. A field for ploughing can only mean a wife, and seeds and plants the children—wheat for boys, barley for girls, pulses for miscarriages. For everyone else a farming dream signifies hard labour and misery.

### Hammond ID 1.51.2



*Cultivating, sowing, planting and ploughing the land*

γεωργεῖν ἢ σπεῖρειν ἢ φυτεύειν ἢ ἀροτριᾶν ἀγαθὸν τοῖς γῆμαι προηρημένοις καὶ τοῖς ἄπαισιν· ἄρουρα μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ γυνή, σπέρματα δὲ καὶ φυτὰ οἱ παῖδες—πυροὶ μὲν υἱοί, κριθαὶ δὲ θυγατέρες, ὄσπρια δὲ τὰ ἐξαμβλώματα†· τοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις, πόνον καὶ κακοπάθειαν σημαίνει.

†Note the significant Greek gender of the three plants

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.51.2



Classics for All

This is an extract selected for you as part of Classics for All's 'Bellaria' series to cheer us up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The full series of weekly instalments may be found on our website [classicsforall.org.uk/bellaria/](https://classicsforall.org.uk/bellaria/)