

## BELLARIA (XV)



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

### ARTEMIDORUS: THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS (5)

*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.*

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

#### **The Roman world**

*It is remarkable that the world of the Roman Empire—especially its higher echelons—rarely features in Artemidorus. Indeed, there is no sign he knew Latin, and his general view seems to be that his world was one of two quite distinct cultures—one Greek and one Roman. Only two emperors—Hadrian and Antoninus Pius—are mentioned, and where emperors feature at all it is mostly as symbols and images:*

To dream of riding on the back of an eagle prophesies death for emperors, the rich, and the great and good. When men of that eminence have died, it is a long-standing convention to depict them in painting or sculpture as riding on eagles,† and to pay them honour with this sort of artistic monument. But the dream is auspicious for poor men: they will be taken in hand by some rich people and given substantial benefits, more often than not after travelling abroad.

†Dead emperors were often thus depicted

### Hammond ID 2.20.2



Greek silver tetradrachm, c. AD 245

ὄχεϊσθαι δὲ ἀετῶ βασιλεῦσι μὲν καὶ ἀνδράσι πλουσίοις καὶ μεγιστᾶσιν ὄλεθρον μαντεύεται. ἔθος γάρ τι παλαιὸν τοὺς ἀποθανόντας τοὺς γε τοιούτους γράφειν τε καὶ πλάσσειν ἐπ' ἀετῶν ὀχουμένους καὶ διὰ τῶν τοιούτων δημιουργημάτων τιμᾶν. πένησι δὲ ἀγαθόν· ἀναληφθέντες γὰρ ὑπὸ τινῶν πλουσίων, ὠφελήσονται οὐ μικρά, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ἀποδημήσαντες.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 2.20.2

#### Punishments

*The one place in Artemidorus where the Roman state seriously impinged on the Greek consciousness was in Rome's legal system and its terrifying punishments. (So too in the Gospels: until Jesus was accused of breaking the law, one could hardly know that Judaea was a Roman province).*

To be **crucified** is auspicious for all who sail, because a cross is constructed from wood and nails just like a ship, and a ship's mast resembles a cross.† It is auspicious also for a poor man, because someone who has been crucified is elevated and has the substance to keep many birds well fed. And the dream brings secrets to light, because someone crucified is exposed to public view. But the dream does harm to the rich, because men are stripped naked for crucifixion, and once crucified they lose their flesh.††

†i.e. is T-shaped

††through decay or being consumed by birds

### Hammond ID 2.53



Crucifixion spikes

σταυροῦσθαι πᾶσι μὲν τοῖς ναυτιλλομένοις ἀγαθόν· καὶ γὰρ ἐκ ξύλων καὶ ἤλων γέγονεν ὁ σταυρὸς ὡς καὶ τὸ πλοῖον, καὶ ἡ κατάρτιος αὐτοῦ ὁμοία ἐστὶ σταυροῦ. ἀγαθὸν δὲ καὶ πένητι· καὶ γὰρ ὑψηλὸς ὁ σταυρωθεὶς καὶ πολλοὺς τρέφει οἰωνούς. τὰ δὲ κρυπτὰ ἐλέγχει· ἐκφανῆς γὰρ ὁ σταυρωθεὶς. τοὺς δὲ πλουσίους βλάπτει· γυμνοὶ γὰρ σταυροῦνται, καὶ τὰς σάρκας ἀπολλύουσιν οἱ σταυρωθέντες.

### **Ὀνειροκριτικά 2.53**

*Artemidorus used the following example of Roman punishments to show how the same dream could have new significance.*

A man had dreamt that he had intercourse with a lump of iron, as if it were a woman: the outcome was that he was condemned to slavery, and his intercourse with iron was to spend his time in its constant company. The great Antipater remembered this, and when someone else dreamt of intercourse with iron he interpreted the dream as signifying condemnation to gladiatorial combat. That was not the result: the dreamer was castrated.

### **Hammond ID 4.65.2**

ἔδοξέ τις σιδήρῳ πλησιάζειν ὥσπερ γυναικί. ἀπέβη αὐτῷ εἰς δοῦλον καταδικασθῆναι, καὶ σιδήρῳ συνεῖναι, τοῦτ' ἔστι συναναστρέφεσθαι. ὁ δὲ βέλτιστος Ἀντίπατρος, τοῦτο μεμνημένος, ἄλλῳ ποτὲ δόξαντι σιδήρῳ πλησιάζειν ὑπεκρίνατο τὴν εἰς μονομάχους καταδίκην· τῷ δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἀπέβη, ἀλλ' ἐτμήθη τὸ αἰδοῖον ὁ ἰδὼν τὸν ὄνειρον.

### **Ὀνειροκριτικά 4.65.2**

#### **Life in the city**

*Artemidorus provides an extraordinarily rich picture of contemporary Greek life in the city (not the country), filled with the masses—butchers, tanners, beggars, barbers, pickpockets—rich and poor alike, people going about their business in marketplace, public meetings, festivals and so on. He and his dreamers seem to have had no interest in the glorious classical past of Greece at all: it was life in the here and now that counted:*



The Athenian *agora*

A **marketplace** signifies disturbance and commotion because of the crowd that gathers there. For those who make their living in the marketplace a dream of a marketplace seething with people and full of noise is auspicious: but an empty and silent marketplace foretells unemployment for them, and for everyone else lasting security. A marketplace which has been **sown with a crop** is obviously out of bounds to all, whatever the crop sown. Some people say that such a prodigy signifies famine for a city which enjoys prosperity, and prosperity for a city experiencing famine. Theatres, streets, suburbs, temple precincts, promenades, and all public spaces have the same meaning as a marketplace.

### **Hammond ID 3.62**

ἀγορὰ ταραχῆς ἐστὶ σημαντικὴ καὶ θορύβου, διὰ τὸν ἐν αὐτῇ ἀγειρόμενον ὄχλον. τοῖς δὲ ἐν ἀγορᾷ ζῶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἀγαθὴ καὶ ὄχλου πλήθουσα καὶ θορύβου μεστὴ ὀρωμένη· ἢ δὲ ἔρημος καὶ ἀθόρυβος ἀπραξίαν μὲν τούτοις, τοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις πολλὴν ἀσφάλειαν προαγορεύει. ἀγορὰ ἐσπαρμένη παντὶ δήπουθεν ἄβατος γίνεται, ὅ τι ἂν ᾗ τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ ἐσπαρμένον. λέγουσι δὲ ἔνιοι τὸ τοιοῦτον τῇ πόλει ἐν μὲν εὐποτμίᾳ λιμόν, ἐν δὲ λιμῷ εὐποτμίαν σημαίνειν. θέατρα δὲ καὶ πλατεῖαι καὶ προάστεια καὶ τεμένη καὶ περίπατοι καὶ πάντα τὰ κοινὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τῇ ἀγορᾷ λόγον ἔχει.

### **Ὀνειροκριτικά 3.62**

#### **Festivals**

*Since Greeks loved public spectacles and competitive rivalry, it is not surprising that festivals and games also featured large in people's dreams. Indeed, outside his life in Ephesus and its environs, the only parts of the Roman Empire that Artemidorus seems to know about are the great international athletics festivals.*



Nicholas Poussin

**All-night carnivals**, festivals held at night, and celebrations into the small hours are auspicious for marriages and partnerships, and signify prosperity and acquisition of property for the poor. And likewise it has been observed that they remove their fears and troubles from those who are troubled or afraid of something: there is no way that one will party all night if one is not in full celebratory mood. These festivities do show up adulterers and the women with whom they commit adultery, but no punishment will follow, because what goes on at these all-night carnivals, however uninhibited, is common knowledge among all participants and in a way licensed behaviour. For prosperous people of some distinction in life such a dream brings them embarrassment and scandal which will ultimately cause them no grief.

### **Hammond ID 3.61**

παννυχίδες δέ, καὶ ἑορταὶ νυκτεριναὶ, καὶ μετὰ ἀγρυπνίας εὐφροσύναι, πρὸς γάμους καὶ κοινωνίας εἰσὶν ἀγαθαί, καὶ τοῖς πένησιν εὐπορίας καὶ προσκτήσεως εἰσι σημαντικαί, καθότι καὶ τοῖς λυπουμένοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις ἄφοβοι καὶ ἄλυποι τετήρηται· οὐ γὰρ ἔνεστι παννυχίζειν μὴ οὐχὶ ἐν πολλῇ εὐφροσύνῃ ὄντας. μοιχοὺς δὲ καὶ μοιχευομένας καταφανεῖς μὲν τίθησι, κολάζει δὲ οὐδαμῶς, ἐπειδὴ τὰ πραττόμενα ἐν ταῖς παννυχίσι γνώριμα μὲν τοῖς συναναστρεφομένοις ἐστί, κὰν ἀκόλαστα ἦ, τρόπον δέ τινα συγχωρεῖται. τοῖς δὲ ἐν εὐπορίᾳ καθεστῶσι, καὶ οἷς ἐστὶν ἐπίλαμπρος ὁ βίος, ταραχὰς καὶ περιβοησίας τίθησιν, ὧν τὸ τέλος ἄλυπον ἂν γένοιτο.

### **Ὀνειροκριτικά 3.61**

#### **Games**

*Athletes seems to have been enthusiastic dreamers, and virtually all the main games are covered, with particular concentration on runners, wrestlers and pancratiasts. Not surprisingly, victory was their main concern:*

(i) A runner who had won the crown in the boys' stade-race at Olympia, and was about to compete in another event, dreamt that he was using the Olympic crown† like a basin to wash his feet. † He lost that second race and was forced to make an inglorious exit from the racecourse: the reason was his sullyng of that earlier crown. †not a wreath but a large cylindrical metal crown, an innovation at the time

### Hammond ID 5.55



Runners at the Games

δρομεὺς ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ παίδων στάδιον ἐστεφανωμένος μέλλων ἕτερον ἀγῶνα ἀγωνίζεσθαι ἔδοξεν ἐν τῷ Ὀλυμπικῷ στεφάνῳ ὥσπερ ἐν λεκάνῃ τοὺς πόδας νίπτεσθαι. ἐλείφθη ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀγῶνα καὶ ἀδόξως ἐξώσθη† τοῦ σταδίου· κατήσχυνε γὰρ τὸν πρότερον στέφανον.

†a missing verb is here supplied

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 5.55

(ii) A junior wrestler who was anxious about the pre-selection for the games dreamt that the adjudicator was Asclepius, and that as he paraded for review with the other juniors he was disqualified by the god. † And in fact he died before the games started. The god had disbarred him not from the games but from life itself, the more usual question on which he is thought to adjudicate.

†athletes were physically examined before being allowed to compete

### Hammond ID 5.13

ἔδοξε παῖς παλαιστής περὶ τῆς ἐγκρίσεως πεφροντικῶς τὸν Ἀσκληπιὸν κριτὴν εἶναι καί, παροδεύων ἅμα τοῖς ἄλλοις παισίν, ἐν παρεξαγωγῇ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκεκρίσθαι. καὶ δὴ πρὸ τοῦ ἀγῶνος ἀπέθανεν· ὁ γὰρ θεὸς οὐ τοῦ ἀγῶνος ἀλλὰ τοῦ ζῆν, οὗπερ μᾶλλον εἶναι κριτὴς νομίζεται, ἐξέβαλεν αὐτόν.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 5.13



Greek wrestling

(iii) An athlete dreamt that he cut off his penis, bound his head, and won the crown. He became a victor in the sacred games and acquired quite a reputation. As long as he remained chaste, he had a brilliantly distinguished athletic career, but once he succumbed to sexual indulgence it came to an inglorious end. †

†to lose semen was to lose strength. Doctors recommended athletes put cold metal plates over their abdomen at night to prevent wet dreams

### Hammond ID 5.95

ἔδοξέ τις ἀθλητής, τὰ αἰδοῖα ἀποτεμὼν καὶ ἅμα τὴν κεφαλὴν δήσας,  
ἔστεφανῶσθαι. ἐγένετο ἱερνίκης καὶ οὐκ ἄδοξος· καὶ μέχρι ἄφθορος ἦν,  
λαμπρῶς καὶ ἐπιφανῶς τῇ ἀθλήσει ἐχρήσατο, χαρισάμενος δὲ ἀφροδισίοις,  
ἀδόξως κατέλυσεν.

### Ὄνειροκριτικά 5.95

### Gladiators

*Gladiators were a Roman invention, but by imperial times they had become very popular in Greece. Indeed, we know of Greek theatres that were re-shaped into gladiatorial rings. After describing the significance of dreams about gladiators (below), Artemidorus went on to argue that the style of gladiator you dreamed about could predict the sort of woman you would marry! This is probably based on the belief that women found gladiators sexually irresistible. Since there were 25 different styles of gladiator, there was plenty of choice for the discerning woman.*

To dream of being a **gladiator** signifies getting involved in a **lawsuit** or having some other dispute or fight on one's hands. We use the word 'fight' both for gladiatorial combat and for an action at law: even though there are no physical weapons in a lawsuit, the gladiators' weaponry signifies the depositions and formal claims submitted by the contestants. The weapons of the defending gladiator always signify being the defendant in a lawsuit, and the weapons of the attacking gladiator signify being the plaintiff.

### Hammond ID 2.32.1



Retiarius vs secutor

μονομαχεῖν δὲ δικάσασθαι σημαίνει ἢ ἄλλην τινὰ στάσιν ἢ μάχην μαχέσασθαι. καὶ γὰρ ἡ πυγμὴ μάχη καλεῖται καὶ ἡ δίκη, εἰ καὶ μὴ δι' ὄπλων γίνεται, ἃ δὴ τὰ ἔγγραφα καὶ δίκαια τῶν μαχομένων σημαίνει· ἀεὶ δὲ τὰ μὲν τοῦ φεύγοντος ὄπλα ἐγκληθῆναι σημαίνει, τὰ δὲ τοῦ διώκοντος ἐγκαλέσαι.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 2.32.1

#### Sigmund Freud

*Freud, keen to find ancient precedent for his theories, was most interested by what he read in Artemidorus' lengthy discussion of dreams involving sex. Defining sex in terms of who was penetrating whom, Artemidorus divided the activity into three groupings: (i) in accordance with 'nature, law and custom', e.g. penetrating a wife or male acquaintance, (ii) 'contrary to law' or social custom—i.e. incest and oral sex, and (iii) 'contrary to nature', e.g. penetrating oneself, being penetrated by a corpse or wild beast, and so on. (Women's dreams on the subject rarely featured.)*

*Freud thought the following dream perfectly exemplified correct dream interpretation: linguistic precision and wish-fulfilment. In this dream, Alexander the Great, laying siege to Tyre, imagined that he saw a satyr (satyros) playing about on his shield. Aristander interpreted it thus:*

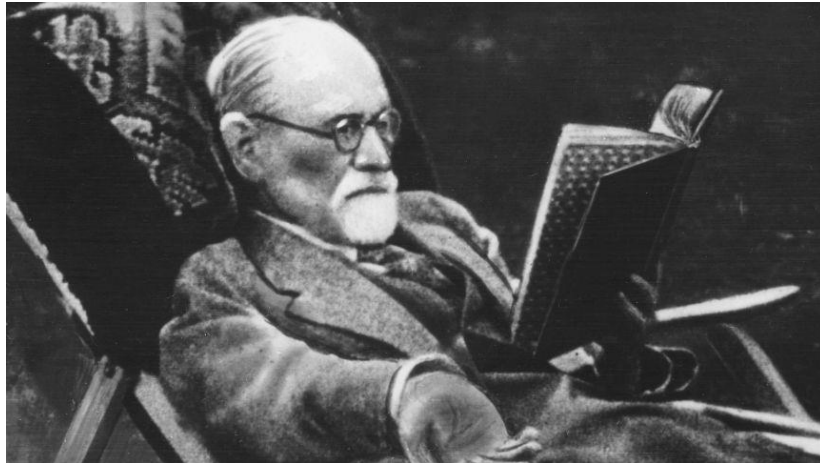
... by separating the syllables in the word *satyros* into 'sa Tyros' ('Tyre is yours') [Aristander] was able to sharpen the king's appetite for the war, with the result that he took the city.

### Hammond ID 4.24.3

τὸ γὰρ 'Σάτυρος' ὄνομα εἰς τὸ 'σὰ Τύρος' διαλαβῶν, προθυμότερον τὸν βασιλέα πολεμεῖν ἐποίησεν, ὥστε καὶ εἴλε τὴν πόλιν.

### Ὀνειροκριτικά 4.24.3





'Fellating oneself, eh? Pretty poor taste, I'd say'

*In fact, the two could not have been further apart. Artemidorus simply thought dreams offered insights into future events. Freud thought a dream's significance could be unlocked only with reference to the dreamer's personality and his suppressed desires.*

This ends the sequence on Artemidorus. I must again express my thanks here to Martin Hammond and Peter Thonemann for allowing me full access to their ground-breaking work, textual and socio-cultural, on Artemidorus. Martin's translation (including his important contributions to the text as well extensive notes and index) and Peter's book on the subject are now reviewed by Anactoria Clarke at: <https://classicsforall.org.uk/book-reviews/an-ancient-dream-manual-artemidorus-the-interpretation-of-dreams/>

Coming next: Rome's wittiest and most scabrous poet...



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