

BELLARIA (XI)



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

Anyone in the ancient world who felt they had 'seen' (as they put it) a dream which they felt might be somehow significant could be offered an interpretative explanation. The biblical story of the fat and lean kine and Penelope's dream of her geese killed by an eagle in the Odyssey provide well-known literary examples. For the man in the street, professional interpreters were available who would charge a fee for their services. Artemidorus from Daldis, near Ephesus, writing c. AD 200, was one such. He composed his Interpretation of Dreams (henceforth ID, 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. By kind permission of Martin Hammond, we shall be using his fine new translation Artemidorus: ID (Oxford World's Classics, 2020), with notes by Peter Thonemann (Wadham College, Oxford), whose superb An Ancient Dream Manual (Oxford 2020) gives a full and fascinating account of Artemidorus' mighty opus.

I express here my gratitude to Martin Hammond, Professor Daniel Harris-McCoy (Hawaii), who composed a text, translation and commentary on ID for Oxford (2012), for providing a digitised Greek text of Books 1-3, and to Peter Thonemann for help with other matters, including digitised Greek passages from Books 4 and 5.

ARTEMIDORUS: THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS (1)

Artemidorus: an Introduction

Artemidorus began his work by describing the breadth and depth of his researches and the time and travel he devoted to them, in contrast to the incoherent and random re-hashings of his predecessors:

My in-depth research into dream interpretation

I, on the other hand, have not only been at great pains to acquire every book there is on dream-interpretation, but over many years I have also spent time with the much-maligned diviners of the marketplace, paying no attention to the disparagement of those po-faced eyebrow-knitters who call them beggars, frauds, and parasites. In Greece, both city by city and at the great religious festivals, in Asia, in Italy, and in the largest and most populous of the islands, I have patiently listened to accounts of historical dreams and their outcomes: there was no other way to get practice in these matters.

Hammond ID Preface 4

ἐγὼ δὲ—τοῦτο μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν ὅ τι βιβλίον οὐκ ἐκτησάμην ὄνειροκριτικόν (πολλὴν εἰς τοῦτο φιλοτιμίαν ἔχων), τοῦτο δὲ καὶ σφόδρα διαβεβλημένων τῶν ἐν ἀγορᾷ μάντεων (οὓς δὴ προΐκτας καὶ γόητας καὶ βωμολόχους ἀποκαλοῦσιν οἱ σεμνοπροσωποῦντες καὶ τὰς ὀφρῦς ἀνεσπακότες)—καταφρονήσας τῆς διαβολῆς ἔτεσι πολλοῖς ὠμίλησα, καὶ ἐν Ἑλλάδι κατὰ πόλεις καὶ πανηγύρεις, καὶ ἐν Ἀσίᾳ καὶ ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ καὶ τῶν νήσων ἐν ταῖς μεγίσταις καὶ πολυανθρωποτάταις ὑπομένων ἀκούειν παλαιούς ὄνειρους καὶ τούτων τὰς ἀποβάσεις· οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἄλλως χρήσασθαι τῇ κατὰ ταῦτα γυμνασίᾳ . . .

Ὀνειροκριτικά Preface 4

Artemidorus then went on to distinguish between two main sorts of dream: those that predicted future events and those that did not. He is the first person we know of to make this particular semantic distinction, though he does not always stick to it:

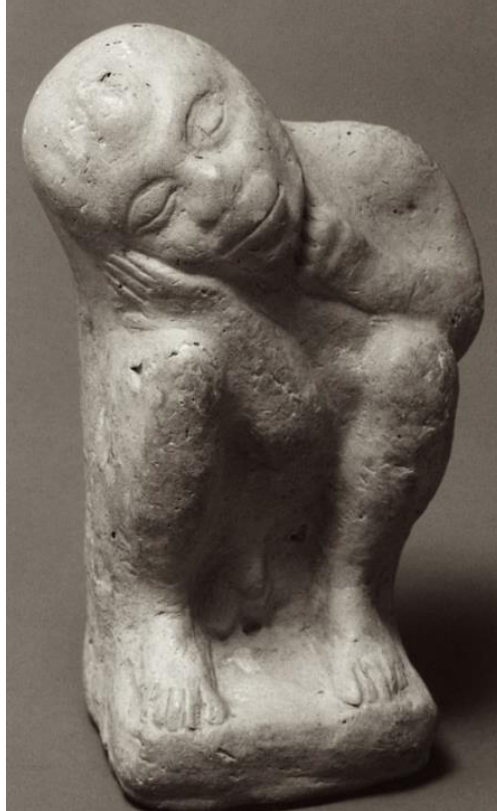
Two types of dream

The difference between two types of dream, the *enhyption* and the *oneiros*, is an important distinction which I have already made elsewhere, but I think it as well to begin again from this same point, since otherwise my treatise could strike you as an unsystematic piece of work not generated, so to speak, from first principles. An *oneiros* differs from an *enhyption* in that the significance of the former relates to future events, and of the latter to present events.

Hammond ID 1.1.1

περὶ μὲν οὖν ἐνυπνίου καὶ ὄνειρου διαφορᾶς τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα διαίρεσις οὐκ ὀλίγη καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις γέγραπταί μοι, καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἄκοσμον καὶ ὥσπερ οὐκ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενόμενον φανεῖται σοι τὸ σύγγραμμα, καὶ νῦν ἀπ' αὐτῶν τούτων ἄρξασθαι καλῶς ἔχον εἶναι μοι δοκεῖ. ταύτη γὰρ ὄνειρος ἐνυπνίου διαφέρει, ἣ συμβέβηκε τῷ μὲν εἶναι σημαντικῷ τῶν μελλόντων, τῷ δὲ τῶν ὄντων.

Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.1.1



As seated, sleeping black man (5th C BC, British Museum)

Artemidorus dismissed *enhypnia* as uninteresting because they simply reflected the dreamer's existing concerns and vanished as soon as s/he woke up. Not, however, the *oneiroi*, those dreams that predicted the future. These predictive dream he distinguished as follows:

Two types of *oneiroi*

Next, in the category of **predictive dreams** (*oneiroi*), some are theorematic and others allegorical. **Theorematic** dreams are those where the outcome corresponds literally to the vision. For example, a man out at sea dreamt that he was shipwrecked, and he did find himself in that situation: when sleep left him, the ship sank and was lost, and he barely managed to survive along with a few others . . .

Allegorical dreams, on the other hand, are those which signify something by means of something else: here the mind is characteristically speaking in riddles.

Hammond ID1.2.1

ἔτι τῶν ὀνείρων οἱ μὲν εἰσι θεωρηματικοὶ, οἱ δὲ ἀλληγορικοί. καὶ θεωρηματικοὶ μὲν οἱ τῇ ἑαυτῶν θεᾷ προσεικότες. οἷον πλέων τις ἔδοξε ναυαγεῖν καὶ διατεθεὶς ἔτυχεν οὕτως. ἐπεὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀνῆκεν ὁ ὕπνος, καταποθὲν ἀπώλετο τὸ σκάφος, αὐτὸς δὲ σὺν ὀλίγοις μόγις ἐσώθη . . . ἀλληγορικοὶ δὲ οἱ δι' ἄλλων ἄλλα σημαίνοντες, αἰνισσομένης ἐν αὐτοῖς φυσικῶς τι τῆς ψυχῆς.

Ὀνειροκριτικά 1.2.1

It is the allegorical to which he exclusively devotes himself.

An early dream interpreter

To give some idea of that allegorical tradition within which Artemidorus was working, here is an example of a dream interpretation which he quoted from one Antiphon (5th C BC), the earliest interpreter of dreams (he might or might not be the same person as the famous Athenian orator and/or sophist). Artemidorus was discussing the messages that dreaming about creatures such as the octopus might be sending to their recipients:



Mosaic from Pompeii with octopus and cuttlefish

Boneless marine animals are only advantageous for criminals, as these creatures too camouflage themselves, blend in to their surroundings, and lurk unseen. For others they signify obstacles and delays because of their adhesive grip, and they predict many slumps in business affairs because they have no bones—and bone is what gives strength to a body. These animals are the octopus, squid, sea anemone, nautilus, musk polypus, purple polypus, and cuttlefish. This last is the only one to benefit those trying to run away, because of the ink which it often employs to make its own escape. Antiphon of Athens also notes this dream.

Hammond, ID 2.14.6

οἱ δὲ μαλακοὶ τῶν ἰχθύων μόνοις τοῖς πανούργοις συμφέρουσι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ μεταβάλλοντες τὰ χρώματα καὶ ὁμοιούμενοι τοῖς τόποις, ἐν οἷς ἂν γένωνται, λανθάνουσι. τοῖς δὲ λοιποῖς ἐμπόδια καὶ κατοχὰς σημαίνουσι διὰ τὸ καθεκτικὸν καὶ ἰξῶδες, καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν ἀτονίας πολλὰς προαγορεύουσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ὄστέα ἔχειν· ἰσχὺς γὰρ σώματος ὄστέον. εἰσὶ δὲ οἶδε, πολύπους τευθὶς ἀκαλήφη ναυτίλος ἐλεδώνη πορφυρίων σηπία. αὕτη δὲ μόνη καὶ τοὺς ἀποδρᾶναι πειρωμένους ὠφελεῖ διὰ τὸν θολόν, ᾧ χρωμένη πολλάκις φεύγει. μέμνηται δὲ τούτου τοῦ ὀνείρου καὶ Ἀντιφῶν ὁ Ἀθηναῖος.

Ὀνειροκριτικά 2.14.6

Readers will now have some idea what to expect!

Dreams and their outcomes: the statistics

The category of ‘boneless marine animals’ is but one of about 1,400 possible dream-subjects which Artemidorus analyses, stretching from tripods to lawyers, from mud to combing one’s hair, and from juggling to bird-lime, stealing stars, a foul-smelling navel and (inevitably) many varieties of sexual encounters. There are also about 3,000 outcomes, because the same dream will have different meanings for different classes of people. Be assured that a judicious selection will be made.

Aristodemus’ methodology deeply impressed Sigmund Freud. In his *Die Traumdeutung* (1899) he said ‘Here not only the content of the dream but also the personality and the circumstances of the dreamer are taken into account so that the same element in the dream has a different meaning for the rich man, the married man, or the orator from the meaning it has for the poor man, the unmarried man, or, say, a merchant’.

Next week we shall begin to look in detail at the principles of interpretation advocated by Artemidorus and what was at stake in them.



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/