

Capstone Seminar Fall 2012

Professor David Blank

Dreams in Greek Culture

What are dreams and why do we have them? Are they messages sent by the gods or by our own minds, the result of mechanical processes within our bodies? Are they prophetic of the future, do they tell us what is happening within us, either mentally or physically? Can they affect us by causing us to change our minds or even by curing us of illness? What do the things we see in dreams mean? Such questions were often asked in ancient Greece, and the seminar will look at some of the answers. We will read texts of Hippocrates, the dream-interpreter Artemidorus, and of patients who have submitted themselves to the ministrations of the healer-god Asclepius. Students will be encouraged to research projects dealing with their own interests, from the use of dreams in Homer, Aeschylus, or Herodotus to the nuts and bolts of healing in the temple of Asclepius.

Week 1: Penelope's Dream, Od. 19.503-604

Amory, Gates of Horn and Ivory

Freud's Sample of Dream Interpretation

Week 2: Regimen IV, On dreams

Aristotle, On Dreams

Week 3: Aelius Aristides, Sacred Tales

Week 4: Harris on Character of Dreams

Hippocratic Corpus, Regimen 1 on the Body and Science

S.R. Price, Future of Dreams

Artemidorus, Bks. 1-2

Artemidorus, Bks. 3-5

Week 5: Artemidorus, Bks. 1-2

Week 6: Artemidorus, Bks. 3-5

Week 7: Artemidorus cont.

Week 8-10 Presentations

Abstracts of Student Papers

Asclepius: The God of Medicine and Healing

Ryann Garcia

The demi-god Asclepius has become a unique figure spanning centuries of classical antiquity. He is a prime example of a man who underwent apotheosis due to his merits as a mortal being. Asclepius rose to fame in the ancient world because his function as a divine healer became a greater necessity as time continued. His temples became famous for their peaceful ambiance and serene atmosphere. Asclepius, who is now considered one of the first doctors of antiquity, was regarded as a figure whose divine powers actually worked on humans. He had a basic cycle for patients to undergo: prayer, abstinence, fasting, incubation, offerings, etc. It is apparent that Asclepius emphasized connection to the earth, for his temples reflected this association as well as the cures that were supposedly given by him. Though his

occupation as a divine healer gave him divine rank, it was his use of dream healings that defined his reputation in antiquity. Asclepius has become a unique figure of dream-study, for his practices tell us that there were connections made between what one could see in a dream and what could happen in the real world. The fact that he had such a large following implied that his “healings” perhaps did actually work. Therefore it was accepted that there did in fact exist a type of medium between the physical world and the unconscious world of sleep and dreams. As we look at a conceptual picture of Asclepius throughout antiquity, a few important questions must be speculated. Why did Asclepius become essential to the Greek and Roman pantheons—what did he have to offer that the other gods could not and how was he different from them? In particular, the focus of this project will look at an analysis of the role that dreams played in how Asclepius functioned as a healer. We will look at the ways in which ancient inscriptions show us how patients who came to the temples of Asclepius were healed as well as if these accounts show that patients’ dreams and the cures given to them have any correlations. Through this study, we will be able to see a transition of how the god Asclepius was worshipped and how the temple medicine he practiced changed along with the way in which dreams functioned during worship and supplication.

Artemidorus: Method, Goal and Reception

Ann-Rachel Hagan

Artemidorus’s work, the *Oneirocritica*, was the ancient attempt of developing an exact “art” of dream divination in hopes of creating a dream manual of sorts to be used by future diviners by occupation. Through understanding Artemidorus’ attempt of using the methodology of Empiricism, one can see the transgression of books and how they pertain to his overall goal of creating this art. His initial goal was to create a streamlined method of relating common and relevant symbols to dream outcomes in any given scenario, hence the examples given in Books One and Two. However, due to poor reception he felt the need to add Books 3, 4, and eventually 5. He felt his first body of work should be sufficient enough in applying his examples to the real world but only if the reader can rationally correlate the two, which was not the case. He indirectly weakened his argument by not presenting his “eye-witness” accounts in the first several books, but instead chose to finally include them in his last work (Book 5) because he deemed them unnecessary to those educated enough in the occupation of dream interpretation.

Despite the irrelevance of the dream symbols in modern society, Artemidorus’ work is continued to be studied due to its immense information presented about the varying socio-economic classes and genders presented in way that you can directly see the social hierarchy and interactions.

Overview of Organization- Book One

What was his goal? Future of dreams... pg 12 “Artemidorus’ main effort was devoted to producing plausible principles for understanding allegorical dreams”--

basics: 2 types of dreams

- **•enhyption:** deals with the current matter of things

- **•oneiros:** deals with the future of things; a movement(or change) or condition of the mind that takes many shapes and signifies good or bad things that will occur in the future--change or molding of the soul

Methodology--“the interpretation of dreams is nothing more than the juxtaposition of similarities”

Three main elements of Artemidorus’ interpretation which were taken from the Empiricists school of thought (medical assumptions)

- **•tradition** (historia)
- **•analogy** (metabasis tou homoioi)
- **•experience** (teresis)

Closer Look at Book One- analyze the social hierarchies present and how they were constructed.

Transformation dream: why did he include the different interpretations? Relates back to the Empiricist view of a multitude of characteristics compose one experience. Hence, It is significant to include these different interpretations

- I. IV.Closer Look at Book Five- how these dreams are relevant to the overall work. They relate to the experiences outlined in the first Books. How does the author’s own view of his work contribute to this organization
- II. V.Conclusion- what is the lasting impact of this work on modern society.

Dreams in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*

Julian Hoffman

Each night as time flies and the moon makes its rise, each human holds a particular activity in common: sleep. Sleep provides us with pleasure, relaxation, and preparation for what we will encounter in the following day. On the opposite side of the spectrum, sleep can bring us pain, discomfort, and terror. If something is so relaxing and commonplace, how then is it possible that this can bring us such terror, and what exactly is this terror? The answer: dreams. Dreams constitute a part of our lives that is inevitable; they fill our minds with these different emotions, unsure of what they truly are. Over time, although notions of dreams have changed, they themselves have remained consistent, tracing back to ancient Greece and Rome. One might assume that dreams were solely taken into consideration in medical texts; this is not the case. Dreams have remained constant in several aspects of people’s lives. This essay strays away from medical texts, instead examining a renowned work of the ancient author Aeschylus: the *Oresteia*. Much to one’s surprise, the *Oresteia* introduces dreams at several points of the action, actually pushing the storyline forward and allowing it to come to its tragic end. Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* is filled with the portentous: prophecy and prophetic vision, dream, omen, ominous speech and action (Roberts, Deborah. “Orestes as Fulfillment, *Teraskopos*, and Teras in the *Oresteia*”, pg. 283).

The intent of this research is to explain, analyze, and provide an interpretation of how Aeschylus uses dreams in the *Oresteia*. I will begin my research by establishing the phenomena of dreams and what they could possibly mean. Next, I will begin my analysis of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, first giving a

background on the text, then describing each play: the *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe*, and the *Eumenides*. In *Agamemnon*, we will first examine the introduction, which includes our main character, Clytemnestra, and a minor, yet important character, the Watchman. Continuing with *Agamemnon*, we will direct our focus on Agamemnon's return home, not looking so much at Agamemnon's return and inevitable death, but the female in the background of the chaos, Cassandra, who gives leeway to additional conceptions of dreams: visions. In explaining Cassandra, I will also provide a description of what visions are, showing their significance and similarities to dreams. Following *Agamemnon*, I will take up with the *Choephoroe*, first discussing the reunion of Orestes and his sister, Electra, who sing prayers to raise their father's ghost. Perhaps the most important event in the *Oresteia* that pertains to dreams is found here in the *Choephoroe*: Clytemnestra's frightening dream. I will include a description of this as well as its importance to the story. In addition to describing Clytemnestra's dream, I will also introduce an important term: *teras*, incorporating Deborah Roberts' article "Orestes as Fulfillment". Last, I will discuss the *Eumenides*, specifically the dream of the Furies in which Clytemnestra's ghost haunts them. Throughout the entirety of my research, I will incorporate Claire Catenaccio's research article "Dream as Image and Action in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*", as well as Eleanor Cederstrom's article "A Study of the Nature and Function of Dreams in Greek Tragedy", in which they both demonstrate a concrete understanding of the interpretations of dreams in the *Oresteia*. Additionally, I will incorporate the idea of fate; it appears as though fate is a central theme in the *Oresteia*, connecting each incident and thus leading to the play's demise. This will also constitute the conclusion of my research, in addition to understanding the idea of a dream.

Why does Suetonius use dreams in his *Lives of the Caesars*?

Ryan Kachold

This essay gives a very brief discussion of the position Suetonius held in Rome and also his attitude toward his work. The main discussion, after a short review of the style and structure Suetonius employs in the work, takes place within the text of the *Lives*, analyzing and interpreting the placement of dreams within the text both structurally and comparatively. A large amount of attention is given to the *Life* of Augustus, because Suetonius holds him to a higher standard and gives him the most words of any Caesar. He also openly compares the other Caesars to Augustus and oftentimes admits that they do not compare. There are also ten explicit references to dreams within Augustus and each one is analyzed here. The next portion discusses the most common categories in which dreams reference the predestined events of rulers; the accession to power, the removal from power and death. Instances of comparison between the dreams in one *Life* to those in another occur and are done in order to further form an answer as to why Suetonius places dreams into the text. One general idea that is formed through the essay is that he uses them as place-holders essentially, when there is a lack of objective information gathered either through records or stories which Suetonius heard and employed. Another possible answer is that Suetonius used them to show that the life and events of each ruler were predestined because of their virtues and vices. Augustus' life was predestined to be great, his rule was viewed positively by the people, and the dreams reflect that. However, Caligula and Nero come with dream references detailing their executions or fall from power.

Aristotle: A Scientific Inquiry on Sleep and Dreams

Eric Lakin

Identifying a causative mechanism and function for sleep and dreams has continually troubled philosophers and scientists for thousands of years. Offering the largest systematic approach to sleep and dreams in ancient times, Aristotle's works (*De Somno et Vigilia*, *De Insomniis*, and *De Divinatione per Somnum*) employ many of the same methods of scientific inquiry used in modern neuroscience research. By examining the logical nature of his psychophysical theories, one begins to truly appreciate the innovative approach he utilizes. Additionally, the accuracy of his hypotheses is only further supported in light of modern findings.

Dissecting Cicero: Dreams and Functionality in *De Divinatione*

Steven Milburn

Cicero's *De Divinatione* inspires a number of interesting questions concerning its' overall structure and message. The nature of dreams and divination is explored through a unique philosophical treatise that employs a literary device emphasizing Cicero as both *auctor* and actor. The nature of dreams in the context of the Roman state is very distinct – they are marginalized and forced into realms outside matters of the state. This is largely due to their private nature, which exists in contrast to the very public, communal nature of Roman politics. Divination served the purpose of assuaging the anxiety of the masses in times of dire trouble, although this was only in regards to matters of the state. Their personal concerns were handled by dream interpreters and astrologers.

The nature of Cicero's work and its' overall opinion is nebulous. It seems more than anything else to be an attempt to reconstitute the Hellenistic tradition of philosophy through a decidedly Roman lens using divinatory practices as a matter of discourse. The dialogue attempts to discuss theology in the context of Roman statehood using a variety of examples from poetry, drama, history, and literature.

- I. i.The Nature of De Divinatione
- II. ii.Cicero's Career
- III. iii.Dreams in De Divinatione
- IV. iv.Public vs. Private Spectrum
- V. v.The Marginalization of Dreams
- VI. vi.Deconstructing the Dialogue
- VII. vii.Hellenistic Philosophy in a Roman Context
- VIII. viii.Discourse on theology

The Epicurean Explanation: On Dreams and Gods

Demetrios Papadakis

The Epicureans hold a unique perspective on dreams in the ancient world. The works of Lucretius and Diogenes of Oenoanda reduce dreams to the mind's reaction to film-like images that constitute one's surroundings in the physical world. Most every other mode of interpretation holds dreams to have symbolic or prophetic significance, which is often attributed to divine causation or some secret knowledge of the soul. Epicureanism gathers the bulk of its argument against meaningful dreams from Democritus' atomic theory and proposition of *eidola*. Lucretius and Diogenes build and adjust the legacy Democritus left to construct an interpretation of dreams that strictly adheres to the larger Epicurean view of the physical world. The Epicurean gods and their relation to dream-stimulating images, however, provoke discontinuity with this placement of dream interpretation within Epicureanism at large.

Defining and Comparing Dreams in Homeric and Virgilian Epic

Erika Schulz

This paper seeks to define the conception of dreams in ancient epic by analysis of individual dreams in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as Virgil's *Aeneid*. Because the *Aeneid* draws from the Homeric epic tradition, there are parallels in his application of dreams, but also distinctly Virgilian adaptations. Analysis of a couple individual dream episodes in the *Iliad* begins the definition of the Homeric dream; this is expounded upon by analysis of key dreams in the *Odyssey*, including Penelope's dream, the only allegorical dream in the Homeric epics, and the episode that establishes the motif of the Gates of Horn and Ivory as dream filters for true and deceptive dreams, respectively. Shifting gears to the *Aeneid*, the dream becomes an element modeled on the Homeric form as a plot impetus, but is embellished and perhaps of greater significance to the work and the hero as a whole. Finally, exploring points of comparison and points of contrast between the two authors with specific reference to the individual dreams discussed, a generalized conclusion is reached about the nature of dreams in ancient epic as well as the difference in Homeric and Virgilian applications of dreams.

The Importance of Religion in the Greco-Persian Wars

Andrew Wellman

In several classical works, authors such as Herodotus will use dreams, prophecies, omens, and other types of supernatural instances to illustrate important events. Herodotus uses these supernatural matters to describe specific and important events of the Persian Wars, particularly with the lineage of powerful kings. The question at hand is whether or not these instances are actually supernatural or not. In understanding the origins and purposes of these dreams, the reader will thereby understand the history of the Persian Wars better. In researching this topic, I studied six books and two scholarly articles. The books included interpretations of the dreams in Herodotus specifically and dreams in

general. I took away the most from my main source, On the War for Greek Freedom by James Romm in which the theme of the balance of power by the gods is stressed. I found that the gods were extremely fond of balance and the “leveling of extremes.” The gods in Herodotus used dreams as a vehicle to convey warning to these powerful figures; that it was time for their destruction. Some of these dreams misled, causing the dreamer to act in a way which leads to their fate. Herodotus placed these dreams in significant events of the Persian Wars to stress the importance of religion. Herodotus portrays Greek and Persian society as relying on dreams, omens, and prophecies heavily to make important decisions. By describing these “supernatural” instances, the reader is able to understand how these societies operated in a better way. Perhaps Herodotus is showing his own piety, but I believe his main objective is to show how much religion and religious acts influenced the Greeks and the Persians.