

Body Adornments in Dream Interpretation



by Artemidorus

In the past, the knowledge needed to decipher clues about human life and predict its course - from astrology to palm reading (chiromancy), from divination using animal entrails (haruspicina) to the interpretation of birds' flight (ornithomancy) - was interconnected in various ways. Among all of these, dream interpretation (oneiromancy) occupies a place of its own. Although it, too, lends itself to numerous magical and superstitious applications - the custom of deriving lottery numbers from dreams still stands out today - the breadth and depth of its field of inquiry have allowed it to survive the scientific and technological revolutions of the modern age, while keeping pace with them. The publication in 1899 of Sigmund Freud's essay The Interpretation of Dreams established it as one of the cornerstones of psychological and psychoanalytic studies. As for the ancient age, the most important work to have survived intact to the present day is the Oneirocritica (Ὀνειροκριτικά) by Artemidorus of Daldis, a scholar and diviner of Stoic training who lived in Asia Minor in the second century A.D. In the second of the five books making up the treatise, immediately after discussing clothing, Artemidorus also offers some insight into the meanings to be attributed to the appearance, during dreams, of rings, necklaces, earrings, and other body adornments. See Artemidorus, Oneirocritica, edited by D. Harris-McCoy, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012, pp. 159-161.

Rings made of iron are good, but they signify that the good things will not come without toil. For in fact the poet calls iron "wrought with much toil". And golden ones that have precious stones are good since those without precious stones signify undertakings that are without profit due to their lack of a stone. For we call the stone which is on the ring the *psephos*, and we call a sum of money the same thing. And there is, moreover, always a need amongst men of this sort for rings. And, for most, rings made of solid beaten metal are always better. For hollow ones and those that contain brimstone inside signify plots and ambushes because they encompass something hidden, or expectations greater than the actual benefits due to their having a greater bulk than their weight.

And those made of amber and ivory and other rings of this sort are beneficial to women alone. And necklaces and chains and earrings and costly gems and every feminine adornment that is passed round the neck is good for women. For in fact it foretells marriage for the unmarried and children for the childless, and, for those who have both, great acquisition and abundance. For just as women are adorned by these objects, thus will they also be adorned by husbands and by children and by wealth (for, in fact, they are by nature fond of wealth, just as they are also fond of adornment). And, moreover, these items embrace the neck, just as both a husband and children do.

And for a man it signifies plots and ambushes and a great complication of affairs, not due to the material but due to their form and construction. For the gold is not, as some have said, grievous due to its material but, quite conversely, is good, as I have often observed, so long as it is not made in a manner that lacks proportion or is excessively bulky or out of place due to its form, as would be the case with necklaces for men, or in a manner that exceeds one's status, such as wreaths and grand adornments and many coins for poor men. For, whenever one should observe a thing of this sort, the gold becomes grievous not due to the material but due to the nature of its preparation.

And objects that have been lost or broken or split in two, for a woman, should they go around her neck, signify the destruction of the things I mentioned above. But, for a man, objects that go around the hand not only reveal the destruction of the trusted members of his house – I mean his wife and manager of the house – but also the diminution of his stores and, for those who are trusted, no longer being trusted. For in fact there is no need among such men for rings. And for many a dream of this sort foretells blindness. For the eyes hold a certain sympathy with rings due to their "gems". And shoes signify the same things as clothing.

century plaster cast, Moscow, Pushkin Museum (Sofia Bagdasarova/Wikimedia).

Below: Reproduction of pages 86–87 from the Greek and Latin edition of Artemidorus's "Oneirocritica", edited by Nicolas Rigault, printed by Marc Orry, Paris 1603 (www.archive.org).

4 Περὶ τῷ δοχεῖν τὰ ἐαυτοῦ ἱμάτια πλυῖν. δ'.

Τὸ δὲ δοχεῖν τὰ ἐαυτοῦ πλυῖν ἱμάτια, ἢ τὰ ἄλλου, ἀποδοῦναι πῶς τῷ δουλεύοντι καὶ τὴν βίον σημαίνει· ὅθεν τὸ ἐπὶ τὰ ἱμάτια τὸν ῥυτίδα ἀποδοῦναι. καὶ τὰ κρυπτά ἐξελέγξαι καὶ ἐκμαθεῖν ποιεῖ. πλυνεῖν γὰρ καταχρηστικῶς ἐπὶ τὸ ἡγεῖν ἡγεῖν οἱ παλαῖοι, ὥς περ καὶ Μένανδρος,
 Ἡνὲρ κακῶς μου πλύνει γυναιχ' ὅπως λέγεις,
 Τὸν πατέρα καὶ σὲ τίς τι σὺς ἐγὼ πλυνῶ.
 ἀπὸ τῷ ἡγεῖν. ὅθεν καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις ἡγεῖν πλύνειν, φοβρὸν τὸ πλυνόμενα ἱμάτια φορεῖν ἐῖδεν.

5 Περὶ τῷ κόσμῳ τῷ ἐκτὸς. ε'.

Δακτύλιοι ἐκπὸς σιδηροῖ, ἀγαθὸν μὲν, ἐκ αὐτοῦ δὲ καμαῶν τὰ ἀγαθὰ σημαίνουσι. πλὴν κερμενὸν γὰρ ὁ ποιητὴς τὸν σίδηρον ἐκάλεσε. ἀγαθοὶ δὲ καὶ οἱ χρυσοὶ οἵ γε ψήφοις ἐχόντες· ἐπὶ οἱ γὰρ ἄψφοι, ἀπερδείξαι τὰς ἐχειρήσεις σημαίνουσι· ὅθεν τὸ ἄψφοι. ψήφον γὰρ καλοῦμεν ὡς περ λίθον τὸν ἐν δακτυλίῳ, ὅπως δὲ καὶ τὰ χρυσάματα ἀειδόμεν. ἀλλ' οἱ ἀμείνονες οἱ ὁλόσφυροι οἱ γὰρ κτεῖναι ἐπὶ τὸν ὄντον ἐχόντες, δόλοισι καὶ ἐνέδραις σημαίνουσι· ὅθεν τὸ ἐμπεδῆσθαι τὸ ἐγκερμενόν. οἱ δὲ, μείζονας τὰς προσδοκίας τῷ ὀφειλῶν· ὅθεν τὸ μείζονα τὸν ὄντον τῷ βάρους ἔχειν. στυγνοὶ δὲ καὶ ἡφαιπνοὶ ἐπὶ οἱ ἄλλοι δακτύλιοι γινώσκαι, γυναιξὶ λόγοις συμφέροισιν. ὅρμοι δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἐνώπια ἐπὶ λίθοι πολυτελεῖς, ἐπὶ πῶς κόσμος περὶ δέξας γυναικεῖς, γυναιξὶν ἀγαθόν. καὶ γὰρ ἀγαθοὶς γάμον προσαγορεύει· καὶ τὰς ἀπικνοῦς πικρὰ, ἐπὶ τὰς ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐχούσας, προσεσκησὶν καὶ περυσίαις πολλῶν. ὡς περ γὰρ ὑπὸ τούτων κοσμοῦνται γυναῖκες, οὕτως

Videri sibi sua vestimenta lavare. CAP. 4.

Videri sibi sua ipsius vestimenta lavare, aut etiam alterius, incommodi alicuius circa vitam depositionem significat. propterea quod etiam vestimenta sordes abiciunt. Occulta etiam deprehendere ac condiscere facit. Lavare enim abusu etiam redarguere veteres dicebant, velut alicubi etiam Menander:
 Si tu mea uxori male inde dixeris,
 Patrem tuum, teque ego laudabo.
 Hoc est, redarguam. Vade etiam his, qui deprehendi ac redargui timent, terribile est vestimenta lota gestare ac videre.

De Mundo externo.

CAP. 5.

Anuli extra ferrei, bonum quidem, sed non citra laborem ipsa bona significant. Poëta enim περὶ κερμενός, hoc est multo labore factum, ferrum vocat. Boni sunt etiam aurei qui lapillos habent. Nam qui lapillis carent, minime lucrosas aggressiones significant, propterea quod calculos non habent. Calculum enim vocamus tum lapillum in anulo, tum etiam pecuniarum numerum. Semper autem meliores sunt anuli ex toto fabrefacti, nulla inanitate & completi. Vacui enim cauique & qui diuinum ac factum quippiam intra se habent, dolos & insidias significant, ob id quod in se continent occultatum. Vacui verò ac caui etiam maiores expectationes quam commoditates praesagiunt, propterea quod maiorem molem quam gravitatem habent. Anuli Succinei & Eburnei, & quicunque alij fieri solent, solis mulieribus conferunt. Monilia verò & catenulae, & inaures, & lapides pretiosi, omniq; ornatus mulieribus circumcollatis, mulieribus bonus est. Nam & inuuptis nuptias portendit, & liberos eis quae liberis carent, & his quae vtrique habent, possessionum acquisitionem & opulentiam magnam. Quomodo enim ab illis ornatur mulieres, sic