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Dreams in Greek Poetry *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*. By William Stuart Messer Ph.D. New York: Columbia University Press. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1918. \ \$1.25 net and 5s. 6d. net.

J. T. S.

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DREAMS IN GREEK POETRY.

The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy. By WILLIAM STUART MESSER, Ph.D. New York: Columbia University Press. London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1918. \$1.25 net and 5s. 6d. net.

THE Department of Classical Philology of Columbia University has approved this monograph as a contribution to knowledge-worthy of publication. We are happy to agree, and we hope that Mr. Messer will be able to fulfil his promise of further contributions to his chosen subject. He was led to the study of the dreams in Greek literature by the discovery—which every serious student of Latin literature will make—that without Greek you cannot get far into Latin; for he first set out to investigate Roman dreams (see *Mnemosyne*, 45, 78-92). His present work is really introductory to a more general study of the ancient dream, especially as portrayed in Latin literature. It deals particularly with the dreams in Homer, Hesiod, and the Tragedians, (1) as a part of the machinery, a motive force in the development of action, narrative, plot, and (2) as artistic ends in themselves, more or less complete, more or less refined, more or less natural or artificial. The author has collected, for his own purposes, all dreams and references to dreams that he can find in Greek or Latin literature down to the second century A.D., and his footnotes give proof of his wide reading and of the intrinsic interest of his materials. His style is somewhat inelegant, and his arrangement unattractive. His method is to plough solemnly through the whole field, noting and discussing each dream as it appears. Accordingly there is too much repetition, and a bewildering abundance of cross-references. If only he had added a short chapter summarising his results, his work would have been more likely to be recognised for what it is—a very sound and useful piece of not particularly inspired research. That the author is no mere

compiler is shown by many touches of just literary appreciation. He is at his best in pointing out that Penelope's dream of geese and eagle (*Odyssey* XIX.) is unlike other dreams in Homer, an allegorical vision which demands interpretation, 'a new departure for the epic, and a model for the allegorical dreams of tragedy.' The second part, in which the eagle returns and announces himself as Odysseus, is in the manner of the older type, the objective dream which tells its own tale without any mystery; and this addition, Mr. Messer thinks, is an indication that the poet felt uneasy about the introduction of the new technique (pp. 33-4). Excellent, again, is the remark (p. 57) that 'the immediate source of the dream in tragedy is to be found *not in religion and cult*, but in the *literature*.' So is the discussion (p. 81 ff.) of the dream in Sophocles' *Electra*, where the old literary motif is adapted, not so much for its mechanical effect upon the plot as for its value as a means and an excuse for the portrayal of character. Finally, the description of the dream in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* as approximating to 'the highly-chiselled miniatures in which the Alexandrian period delights,' strikes me as just and illuminating. Where Mr. Messer sticks to the literature and his own commonsense, his work is sound and useful. Sometimes, unfortunately, he is led, like most of us, into the dangerous by-paths of cult-conjecture. On p. 4, for example, after a sound sane statement in the text that Hermes is *not* portrayed in Homer as a god of dreams, and that *ὄνειροπομπός* as his epithet is *not* ante-Alexandrian, we are dismayed to read in a footnote that 'From Hermes *ὄνειροπομπός* to Hermes *χθόνιος* . . . the step was short.' Similar mental pressure produced, I think, the strange juggling with the meaning of the plain word *κακόν* on p. 12. But why, in the footnote to p. 16, Mr. Messer suddenly exclaims, 'Add Granger . . . etc., I cannot conjecture.'

J. T. S.