

# The Power of the Phallus in Greek Divination

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In Greek divination, the phallus is a symbol of strength and power, as a number of descriptions of methods of forecasting in the Roman imperial period show. It is therefore helpful to analyse ancient divinatory texts and methods featuring the power of the phallus in accordance with the thinking of those times.

To begin with, we shall explore the symbolism of phallic dreams in the light of ancient Greek interpretations of oneiric material in the treatise of Artemidorus of Daldis, *Oneirocritica*, an extant work on this subject in five books. Although Artemidorus was born in the second century bce in Ephesus, a city renowned for the many notable persons who had lived there, it was to his mother's little town of Daldis in Lycia that he wanted to link his fame. Artemidorus was a theoretician as well as a professional dream-interpreter, emphasising the symbolism of dreams as a means of predicting the future of the dreamer or a closely linked person (Book I 1).<sup>1</sup>

Heeding previous classifications inspired by the Stoic school, Artemidorus distinguishes between two types of dream phenomena: the non-predictive dream (*enhýpnia*), merely indicative of the dreamer's thoughts, and the prophetic dream (*óneiroi*). The latter he considers of interest as a means of foreseeing the future but it needed another fundamental division: a distinction between the immediately perspicuous dream (*óneiroi theōrēmatikoi*) that directly predicts the future and comes true instantly, and the symbolic one (*óneiroi allēgorikoi*) that predicts it allusively. For the former category, the theomatic dream, no explanation is needed; the meaning was openly transparent, whereas the latter, the allegorical, is unclear and requires the skill of an interpreter, coming true only after a certain lapse of time. The art of Artemidorus was solely devoted to this type of dream in order to explain its true meaning and thus see into the future.<sup>2</sup>

In his first Book dedicated to Cassius Maximus (probably the Neoplatonist sophist Maximus of Tyrus) Artemidorus sets out some general rules of dream-interpretation. He compares bodily parts with respective symbolic functions. Thus, he asserts, the penis corresponds to one's parents or children and also to one's wife, given that this organ is strictly necessary to procreate as well as to guarantee normal sexual relations between a married couple:

Τὰ δὲ ἀμφὶ <τὸ> σῶμα ἢ μέρος τι σωματικὸν καὶ τὰ ἐκτός, οἷον κλινίδια ἢ κιβώτια ἢ κιστίδια καὶ τὰ ἄλλα σκεύη ἐσθήματά τε καὶ τὰ ὅμοια, καίτοι ἴδια ὄντα, πολλάκις φιλεῖ καὶ τοῖς πέλας ἀποβαίνειν κατ' οἰκειότητα τῶν χρειῶν, οἷον κεφαλὴ εἰς πατέρα, πὺς εἰς δοῦλον, δεξιὰ χεὶρ εἰς πατέρα υἱὸν φίλον ἀδελφόν, ἀριστερὰ χεὶρ εἰς γυναῖκα καὶ μητέρα καὶ φίλην καὶ θυγατέρα καὶ ἀδελφήν, **αἰδοῖον** εἰς γονεῖς καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ τέκνα, κνήμη εἰς γυναῖκα καὶ φίλην. Τῶν δὲ ἄλλων ἕκαστον, ἵνα μὴ μακρολογῶμεν, οὕτω σκοπτέον. (Book I, 2,7–8 Hercher)

But things related to <the> body or a part of the body and also external objects such as beds or boxes or baskets and the other household items, garments, and the like, although personal, often have an effect on others based on the nature of the relationship. For example, the head refers to a father, the foot to a slave, the right hand to a father, son, friend, or brother, the left hand to a wife and mother and lover and daughter and sister, the penis to the parents and wife and children, the lower leg to a wife and lover. And, to be brief, everything else should be assessed in this manner. (Transl. McCoy 2012, 53 revised)

According to Artemidorus, dreaming of a phallus has important consequences for one's kin. This exegetical rule for interpreting phallic visions recurs where it is properly centered on the penis:

<sup>1</sup> On the work and activity of Artemidorus, see Hopfner 1937b: 2241–44; Puck 1955: 83–86; White 1975: 10–12; Weber 2000: 2, with further bibliography; Holowchak 2002: 94, 101–103; Price 2004: 233–253.

<sup>2</sup> See Kessels 1969: 391–392; Frenschkowski 1995: 305; Holowchak 2002: 94–97; Price 2004: 233–235.

Τὸ **αἰδοῖον** ἔοικε γονεῦσι μὲν, ἐπεὶ τὸν σπερματικὸν ἐπέχει λόγον· τέκνοις δέ, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸ τέκνων αἴτιον, γυναικὶ δὲ καὶ ἐρωμένη, ὅτι πρὸς ἀφροδίσια ἐπιτήδειόν ἐστιν. Ἀδελφοῖς δὲ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς καθ' αἷμα προσήκουσιν, ἐπεὶ τοῦ παντὸς οἴκου ὁ λόγος ἤρηται ἀπὸ τοῦ **αἰδοίου**. Ἰσχύι δὲ καὶ τῇ τοῦ σώματος ἀνδρεία, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸ τούτων αἴτιον· διὸ ἀνδρεία πρὸς τινων καλεῖται. Λόγοις δὲ καὶ παιδείᾳ, ὅτι γονιμώτατον πάντων τὸ **αἰδοῖον** ἐστὶν ὥσπερ καὶ ὁ λόγος. Εἶδον δὲ καὶ ἐν Κυλλήνῃ γενόμενος Ἑρμοῦ ἄγαλμα οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ **αἰδοῖον** δεδημιουργημένον λόγῳ τινὶ φυσικῷ. Ἔτι καὶ περιουσίᾳ καὶ κτήσει διὰ τὸ ποτὲ μὲν ἐπιτετάσθαι ποτὲ δὲ ἀνεῖσθαι καὶ παρέχειν καὶ ἀποκρίνειν δύνασθαι. Βουλευμάσι δὲ ἀπορρήτοις, ὅτι μήδεα καλεῖται τὰ τε βουλευμάτα καὶ τὸ **αἰδοῖον**. Πενία δὲ καὶ δουλεία καὶ δεσμοῖς ὅτι ἀναγκαῖον καλεῖται καὶ τῆς ἀνάγκης ἐστὶ σύμβολον. Πρὸς δὲ καὶ ἀξιώματος ἐπιτιμία· αἰδῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐπιτιμία καλεῖται. Τοιγάρτοι παρὸν μὲν καὶ μένον ἐν τῇ τάξει τῇ οἰκείᾳ ἐπιδιαμεῖναι τὸ παρὸν ἐκάστῳ ὅ τι ἂν ᾗ ὁμοιον τῷ **αἰδοίῳ** σημαίνει, αὐξῆσαν δὲ καὶ ἐπαύξει, ἀφαιρεθὲν δὲ στερίσκει· δυσι γὰρ ἅμα **αἰδοίοις** οὐκ ἔνεστι χρῆσθαι.

Οἶδα δὲ τινα, ὃς ἔδοξε τρία ἔχειν **αἰδοῖα** δοῦλος ὢν, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐλεύθερος καὶ ἀνθ' ἐνὸς ὀνόματος τρία ἔσχε, <τὰ> δύο τοῦ ἀπελευθερώσαντος προσλαβόν. Ἀλλὰ τοῦτο ἅπαξ ἐγένετο· δεῖ δὲ μὴ ἀπὸ τῶν σπανίων ἀλλὰ τῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ἐχόντων τὰς κρίσεις ποιεῖσθαι. (Book I 45 = 42–43 Hercher)

The **penis** is like parenthood, since it contains the generative principle. And children, since it is the cause of children. And a wife and one's lover, because it is made for sex. And also siblings and all those related to blood, since the explanation behind the entire house hinges upon the penis. And also the strength and manliness of the body, because the penis is the most fertile of all, as is speech. And I have also seen while in Cyllene an icon of Hermes that is nothing other than genitals crafted in a realistic fashion. Moreover, they resemble profit and acquisition due to their ability to expand at times and at other times contract and furnish and emit. And 'unspeakable' plans, since both 'plans' and the 'pudenda' are called one's 'counsel'. And also poverty and slavery and bondage because it is called one's necessity and is a signifier of need. And it is akin to respect based on reputation. For 'shame' is also called 'honour'. For, in fact, when the genitals are present and remain in their natural location, it signifies that whatever the penis signifies will remain in its present state. But increasing or decreasing, and increase or decrease, respectively. And, doubling, they signify that everything will be doubled except a wife or lover. Rather, one will be deprived of these. For one has no use for two penises. And I know of a certain man who imagined that he, being a slave, had three penises, and he became free and in place of one name he received three, receiving <the> two names of the one who freed him. But this happened only once, and it is necessary to make interpretations not from rare cases but from those that occur often (Transl. McCoy 2012, 99 revised).

The matter switches to testicles in the following chapter as they are close to the penis, which is the more relevant aspect of Artemidorus' discussion on genitals:

Οἱ βουβῶνες οὐ μακρὰν τῶν **αἰδοίων** οὐδὲ διάφορόν τι σημαίνουσιν. Ὅθεν χρῆ κατὰ ταῦτα τοὺς βουβῶνας τοῖς **αἰδοίοις** ἐκλαμβάνειν. Οἱ δὲ μηροὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα ἐπίσης τοῖς **αἰδοίοις** σημαίνουσι, μόνον δὲ πιαλέοι γενόμενοι τοῖς πλουσίοις ἀηδεῖς τετήρηται· ὡς γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον περὶ τὰ ἀφροδίσια δαπάνας σημαίνουσι σχεδὸν δὲ οὐδὲ δαπάνας ἀλλὰ βλάβας. (I 46, 43–44 Hercher)

The groin is not far from the **penis** nor do they signify anything different. It is therefore necessary to interpret the groin in the same manner as the **penis**. And the thighs signify everything in common with the **penis**, except that thighs that have become fat have been observed to be disagreeable to the rich. For, for the most part, they signify expenditure on sex or, more precisely, not just expenditure but real damage! (Transl. McCoy 2012, 99).

Of further interest are the accounts given of certain phallic dreams, the interpretation of which serve as examples in the Fifth Book. The Fourth Book as well as the Final Book of the *Oneirocriticon* are intended for Artemidorus' son to enable him gain the highest degree of professional excellence as a dream-interpreter. In his Final Book, the author relates various dreams together with their respective

consequences for the dreamers. The author comments on the semantic relation between an alleged oneiric vision, its predictive meaning and its fulfillment. He intends to show through his allegorical exegesis why a given dream will necessarily be fulfilled in a certain way. In other words, his procedure for interpreting oneiric experiences serves as a basic rule in understanding why a seemingly obscure vision signifies a given thing or consequence that will unavoidably occur within the coming few years. From the dream-interpreter's narrative point of view, it is a matter of real dreams that happened sometimes. These oneiric episodes had such significance for the dreamers, even if somebody else had such a dream.

Today, it is impossible to reconstruct real oniric visions, even if we have an autobiographical dream report. That is the case for the second century ce sophist Aelius Aristides, an engaged man, rhetor and a professional dreamer at Asclepius' sanctuary at Pergamum, where he spent several incubation nights. He left a journal of his dreams, regularly noting the daily or nightly apparitions of the benevolent god whose special favours he believed he would surely experience throughout his lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

Let us consider the phallic dream reports compiled by Artemidorus and their predictive significance to appreciate the thinking of those times, where individual religious experience is investigated in detail. Let us state straightaway that a dream of an iron phallus is not a sign of greatness nor of power, but should be construed as an omen of death because rust—a symbol of decay—would undoubtedly be present on the iron:

Ἔδοξέ τις σιδήρεον **αἰδοῖον** ἔχειν. Ἐγένετο αὐτῷ υἱός, ὑφ' οὗ ἀνηρέθη. Καὶ γὰρ ὁ σίδηρος ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐξ αὐτοῦ γενομένου ἰοῦ φθείρεται. (Book V 15, 257 Hercher)

A certain man imagined that he had his **penis** made of iron. He had a son who killed him. For in fact iron is destroyed by the rust that arises from itself (Transl. McCoy 2012, 379).

Clearly, a specific association of ideas is to be found here. The rusty iron forewarns the dreamer that he will be killed by his own son, even if the dream reports no reference to rust. That iron corrodes is a common observation to which everyone can relate. This means that a dream interpreter uses much of his own experience to develop a consequent exegetical procedure. For instance, a fully hairy penis is viewed as an omen of effeminacy and a passive homosexual lifestyle:

Ἔδοξέ τις τὸ **αἰδοῖον** αὐτοῦ ἄχρισ ἄκρας τῆς κορώνης τετριχῶσθαι καὶ λάσιον εἶναι πυκνῶν πάνυ τριχῶν αἰφνίδιον φυεῖσῶν. Ἀποπεφασμένος κίναιδος ἐγένετο πάση μὲν ἀκολάστῳ χαρισάμενος ἡδονῇ [θηλυδρίας τε καὶ ἀνδρόγυνος ὄν], μόνῳ δὲ τῷ **αἰδοίῳ** κατὰ νόμον ἀνδρῶν μὴ χρώμενος. Τοιγαροῦν οὕτως ἀργὸν ἦν αὐτῷ τὸ μέρος ἐκεῖνο, ὡς διὰ τὸ μὴ τρίβεσθαι πρὸς ἕτερον σῶμα καὶ τρίχας ἐκφῦσαι. (Book V 65, 266 Hercher)

A certain man imagined that his **penis** had sprouted hair up to the very tip and suddenly became shaggy with thick, blooming hair. He became a well-known passive homosexual, delighting in every licentious pleasure, [being effeminate and a girly-boy,] and did not use his **penis** in the normal manner of men. For, in this way, that part of him went unused so that, due to its not rubbing against some other body, it grew hair. (Transl. McCoy 2012, 395)

Subsequently, the dream interpreter may conclude that to have a hirsute body part is a consequence of laziness. Such a meaning is not restricted to the penis, but it is also extended to other bodily parts, like the tongue and the hand. In Book in I 32 (= 34 Hercher), Artemidorus asserts that to imagine hair growing on the tongue, whether white or black, is inauspicious.<sup>4</sup>

Hair growing on the tongue itself or on the palate, the gums, the teeth or the lips is likewise a sign of idleness.<sup>5</sup> To support this view, Artemidorus quotes an earlier diviner and oneirocritic writer, Apollonius the Attalean, in the second book of his lost treatise.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Festugière 1954: 97–103; Johnston 2008: 92.

<sup>4</sup> τὸ δὲ δοκεῖν τρίχας ἔχειν ἐκ τῆς γλώττης πεφυκνίας εἴτε λευκάς εἴτε μελαίνας οὐκ ἀγαθὸν ἂν εἴη.

<sup>5</sup> Artemidorus, *Oneir.* I 32 (34 Hercher): ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς γλώσσης πεφυκνῆναι τὰς τρίχας ἢ ἐκ τῆς ὑπερώας ἢ ἐκ τῶν οὐλῶν ἢ ἐκ τῶν ὀδόντων ἢ ἐκ τῶν χειλῶν.

<sup>6</sup> Artemidorus quotes Apollonius the Attalean only here and in *Oneir.* 3, 28, where he speaks about a dream of a mouse and a weasel and also refers to Melampus' book on portents and signs (Del Corno 1969: 104). We have no other

To have hair growing is particularly relevant to dreams of the hand:

τρίχας ἔχειν ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν πεφυκυίας ἀπὸ μὲν τῶν καρπῶν δεσμὰ σημαίνει ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν πλατειῶν τῶν ἐντὸς σχολὴν καὶ ἀγρίαν πᾶσι σημαίνει, μάλιστα δὲ γεωργοῖς καὶ χειροτέχναις· οὐκέτι γὰρ περὶ τὰ ἔργα τριβομένων τῶν χειρῶν οὐδὲ πυκνουμένης τῆς ἐπιφανείας εἰκὸς ἂν εἶη καὶ τρίχας ἀναφανῆναι. (Book I 42 = 41 Hercher)

To have hair growing from one's hands out of one's wrists signifies shackles, and from the flat of the hands on the palm-side signifies idleness and unemployment for all, and most of all for farmers and artisans. For when the hands are no longer worn away by work and the surface of the skin is not hardened, it is likely that hair will appear. (Transl. McCoy 2012, 95, 97)

Artemidorus applies the same method to interpretate the link between the penis and the procreation of sons:

Ἔδοξέ τις γυνὴ τὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς **αἰδοῖον** ἀφηρημένον τοῦ λοιποῦ σώματος ἔχειν ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ καὶ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ καὶ πολλὴν ἔχειν πρόνοιαν ὅπως σώζοιτο. Ἐγένετο αὐτῇ υἱὸς ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς **αἰδοῖον** τοῦ παιδὸς ἦν σημεῖον· ἐξ αὐτοῦ γὰρ ὁ παῖς ἐγεγόνει. Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἀφῆρέθη αὐτὸ τοῦ λοιποῦ σώματος, ἀναθρεψαμένη τὸν παῖδα τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀπηλλάγη. (Book V 86 [272 Hercher])

A certain woman imagined that she was holding in her hands her husband's penis which had been removed from the rest of his body and took care of them and put much forethought into their safekeeping. She gave birth to a son by this husband, whom she raised. For her husband's penis signified the son, since from him the son was born. But because they were removed from the rest of his body, after she raised the child, she separated from her husband. (Transl. McCoy 2012, 403–404)

The following example comes from an erotic dream in which anal sex takes place between a man and the god Ares. It is considered a good omen. Though he does not specifically mentions any penis, Artemidorus takes the god's sexual organ to represent a knife. On this basic supposition, the dream interpreter uses metonymy to view the god of warfare as a hint to a knife:

Ἔδοξέ τις ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἄρεως [τοῦ θεοῦ] περαίνεσθαι. Διάθεσις αὐτῷ ἐγένετο περὶ τὴν ἔδραν καὶ τὸν πόρον, καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἐδύνατο ἄλλω τινὶ τρόπῳ θεραπευθῆναι, τομῇ χρησάμενος ἐθεραπεύθη. Ἐσήμαινε γὰρ <ὁ μὲν Ἄρης> τὸν σίδηρον, ὡς καὶ ἐν τῇ συνηθείᾳ τὸν σίδηρον Ἄρην καλοῦμεν μετωνυμικῶς· ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ συνουσίᾳ ἡδονῇ τὸ μὴ ἐπ' ὀλέθρῳ τὴν τομὴν γενέσθαι ἐδήλου. (V 87= 272 Hercher)

A certain man was penetrated by Ares [the god]. A medical condition arose in him having to do with his buttocks and rectum and, because he was unable to get better by any other means, after resorting to surgery he was healed. For <Ares> signified the knife, just as we also customarily refer to a knife as 'Ares' by metonymy. And the pleasurable nature of their intercourse revealed that the surgery would not have a deleterious outcome. (Transl. McCoy 2012, 405)

Since the intercourse with the god was a source of pleasure (hedone), this vision bodes well for the dreamer. Had the penetrated man not enjoyed it, Artemidorus would not have deduced from the dream the prediction that surgery on his buttocks would heal him. Dreaming of having three penises requires interpretation founded on a freer association of ideas:

Ἔδοξέ τις τρία **αἰδοῖα** ἔχειν. Ἔτυχε δοῦλος ὢν καὶ ἐλευθερώθη καὶ τρία ἀντὶ ἐνὸς ὀνόματος ἐκτήσατο, τὰ δύο ἐκ τοῦ ἐλευθερώσαντος προσλαβόν. (V 91 [272 Hercher])

A certain man imagined that he had three penises. He happened to be a slave and was freed and, instead of having one name, he acquired three, receiving two more from the one who freed him (Transl. McCoy 2012, 405)

Such a dream can prognosticate the end of slavery, given that three penises by analogy correspond to tria nomina according to Roman naming conventions. As a freedman, the dreamer will become a Roman citizen. Once released from slavery, (manumissio), he will receive the nomen and praenomen of his former owner (patronus). This explanation shows that dreams have not the same value for everyone. The above interpretation is valid only for slaves only. It irrelevant for free

citizens, who already have three names. Diviners obviously take into account the identity of their clientele. Divinatory handbooks usually offer prognostics that differ according to whether the person concerned is a freeman or a slave, a soldier or a merchant, a girl of marriageable age or a widow. The slave (*doulos*) is regularly quoted among the specific kinds of consultants, which also the addressees of quiver-book, for instance in the series of four lives, which regularly appear in *P. Flor.* III 391.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, preconceived ideas about athletic life compelling young boys to chastity account for the interpretation of a dream about emasculation:

Ἔδοξέ τις ἀθλητῆς τὰ **αἰδοῖα** ἀποτεμῶν καὶ ἅμα τὴν κεφαλὴν δῆσας ἐστεφανῶσθαι. Ἐγένετο ἱερονίκης καὶ οὐκ ἄδοξος· καὶ μέχρι ἄφθορος ἦν, λαμπρῶς καὶ ἐπιφανῶς τῇ ἀθλήσει ἐχρήσατο, χαρισάμενος δὲ ἀφροδισίοις ἀδοξῶς κατέλυσεν. (V 95 [= 273 Hercher])

A certain athlete imagined that, cutting off his genitals and binding his head at the same time, he received a wreath. He became a champion in the Sacred Games and was not without esteem.

And, so long as he remained chaste, he had an illustrious and conspicuous athletic career. But, delighting in sexual pleasures, he retired in ignominy. (Transl. McCoy 2012, 407)

Strict chastity is the price the dreamer has to pay for athletic victories. On the other hand, sexual gratification will eventually be outweighed by defeat from his competitors. Dio Chrysostomos 28, 5–8 accounts of the boxer Melanchomas of Caria, the most magnificent of them all, who devotes himself solely to his matches and thinks of nothing else than competing. For all his splendid athletic achievements, Melanchomas came to a pitiful end having never experienced any of the pleasures of life. He was so ambitious that on his deathbed he asked to his friend Athenodorus the pancratiast how many days were left in the competition (see Miller, *Arete*, p. 161–162).

Clearly, abstinence was the normal rule of life for all who trained with a view to winning laurels. An athlete's entire energy went into striving. Plato uses the athlete as a model of the benefits of abstinence. The Olympic athlete, Iccus of Taranto, is reputed to have been the first, at the height of his training, to have abstained from sexual intercourse with a woman or a boy.<sup>8</sup> Many taboos in medical precepts and philosophical writings reinforce the idea of athletes remaining chaste to ensure victory. Sexual intercourse implies the loss of manly vigour. If a man embraces the pleasures of Aphrodite, he will lose all endurance.<sup>9</sup> When training to become as strong and robust as a bull, a man can therefore only attain his full potential through the observance of the strictest chastity.<sup>10</sup> With such prerequisites, it becomes easier to follow Artemidorus' logic when he surmises that athletes, ambitious to win, while conscious of the handicap their sexual urges represents, have dreams in which their genitals are cut off. In Roman times, athletes and sportsmen would, of course, frequently seek to find out from divinatory sources the outcome of an athletic event, a match or a competition. A specific request for the foreseen result of a match also occurs in the cleromantic set of questions and answers known as *Sortes Astrampsychi*.<sup>11</sup>

Another divinatory example of the power of the phallus is found in a second century A.D. text contemporary to Artemidorus' *Oneirocritica* and Aelius Aristides' oneiric reports. A Graeco-

<sup>7</sup> See Costanza 2009a: 11; Id. 2019: 88. Quiver-book and quiver-literature are technical definition for palmomantic book and palmomantic literature, that is a divination founded on quivers of the human body.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Lg.* VIII 839e–840a, Ael. *V.H.* 11, 3, *H. An.* 6, 1; see Foucault 2004: 124, 172.

<sup>9</sup> See Homer, *Od.* k 341; Ps.-Aristotle, *Probl.* 4, 6; Galen, *Sem.* 1, 16, p. 585 K.; Aret. 4, 5, p. 71 H.; Aet. in Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 231, i p. 177 b 31, Th. Hopfner, *Askese*, in *Real Enc.* 7A1 (1940), 50–64, esp. 62. According to medical thought, sex provokes the loss of energy, δύναις. See parallels in Latin Poetry in Ovid. *Am.* III 11, 13–14; Prop. II 16, 27; Schol. Pers. 1, 18.

<sup>10</sup> On this topic, see Hopfner, *Askese*, 63–64; W. Burkert, *Homo necans. Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen* (= *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* 32), Berlin 1972, 117 with nt. 43; R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in early Greek Religion*, Oxford 1983, 84; M. Foucault, *L'uso cit.*, 25. Such a conception is acting still today and it inspires the camp pre-match, which are organised, in order to keep the sport-players in solitary confinement and compel them to a temporary sexual abstinence.

<sup>11</sup> See van der Horst 1998: 166 with nt. 96 on this known example of question, which will be changed into: “will I be elected as bishop?” in medieval manuscripts. After the end of ancient Greek athletic games, this question had not more sense, while competition for career in the Church was very hard, see also Lane Fox 1987: 677.

Egyptian papyrus now in Florence (P.S.I. X 1178) relates to hieroscopy (ἱεροσκοπία), a divinatory act performed as part of a temple blood sacrifice in which the animal's entrails, especially the liver, are scrutinised for any irregularity or ostensible peculiarity as to, for instance, colour, shape and absence or not of lobes.<sup>12</sup> Hieroscopy was already well-attested in Ancient Mesopotamia and Near Eastern areas with authoritative influence in the cultic-political life of society.<sup>13</sup> Sacrificial divination is unknown in the Homeric epics, whereas tragic poets of the fifth century describe it as a coherent system wholly developed. From the last quarter of the sixth century onward, it developed into the most widely practiced expertise of Greek divination, especially in the military context.<sup>14</sup> The connection with Near Eastern hepatoscopy is of particular relevance. It is reasonable to assume that hieroscopy was adopted by Greece during the Dark Age from West-semitic regions of Asia Minor. It seems very likely that hieroscopy actually originated in the Ancient Near East, where liver-divination was previously exercised by a priesthood under the command of kings. Such methods spread from Mesopotamia to Greece between the eighth and the sixth centuries bce. Cyprus could have been the transit point for this cultural transfer.<sup>15</sup> It is credited to be the homeland of Greek sacrificial divination and undeniably played the main role as a bridge between West Semitic peoples and Greece, as confirmed by archaeological evidence.<sup>16</sup> Despite long-standing philosophical objections,<sup>17</sup> hieroscopy was widely favoured by practitioners drawing revelations from the entrails of sacrificial temple victims. By examining the entrails, the diviner developed a topographic lecture of the splits and lines on their surface that would lead them to prophetic speculation.<sup>18</sup> The most useful testimonies on this matter are the practical handbooks of observations preserved by Greek papyri on hieroscopy (second to third century ce), which provide exhaustive information on the effectiveness of practices in the cultic life of hieroscopy linked to a priestly class.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, no Medieval manuscripts are extant. There are still available fragments from the lost work *On Sacrifices* (Peri thysiôn) written by Atthidographers, like Philochorus (fourth/third century BCE), who were strongly interested in religious traditions.<sup>20</sup> In P.S.I. X 1178, a prophecy about a hepatic lobe reveals the commonly held idea of the male sexual organ being source of strength. This second century ce papyrus lists good and bad presages drawn from every aspect and peculiarity observed on liver parts and interpreted in favour of the one who provided the sacrifice.<sup>21</sup> As usual, terms of human anatomy are transferred to hepatic parts: the liver of a victim, usually a sheep, is conceived as scaled-down version of a man. It represented a microcosm of a human being (Furley-Gysemergh 2015: 2):

<sup>12</sup> The Greeks named the technique under a great number of titles. Beyond *hieroskopía*, we find frequently employed terms such as *hieromanteía*, *hēpatoskopía*, *splanchnoskopía*, *thyoskopía*, *thytiké*, *bōmoskopía*.

<sup>13</sup> The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal actively promoted divination including hieroscopy. On Assyro-Babylonian hieroscopy, see Boissier 1905; Bezold 1905: 246ff.; Dillon 1932; Jeyes 1989: 52; Starr 1990; Dietrich-Loretz 1990 for Ugaritic liver divination; Guinan 2002: 19, 24–2; Sweek 2002: 42ff.; Glassner 2012: 30–39.

<sup>14</sup> See Jameson 1991: 198; Flower 2008: 25.

<sup>15</sup> For the invention of hieroscopy by Cypriots, see Tatian, *Adv. Gr.* 1, p. 1.6, Burkert 1975: 76ff., West 1997: 46f. On sacrificial divination linked with the island, as archaeological and epigraphic proofs from the temple of Apollon 'The sacrificer' (*Mageiros*) at Pyla, see Besques 1936: 3ff.; Robert 1978: 338–44 = Idem 1989: 640–46; Detienne 1989: 12f.

<sup>16</sup> See Furley-Gysemergh 2015: 7; Costanza 2016: 437–441.

<sup>17</sup> See Plato, *Ti.* 71C–e, Plato discredits liver examination, once the victim is dead, this organ is drained of rational influence and it is not useful for prophetic ends, see Lehmann 1898: 59ff., 75; Hopfner 1928b: 1284. Objections against liver examination were strengthened by the Neo-Platonist Porphyry devoted to a spiritual worship, see his treatise *Abst.* 2.28.4, 2.31.1–2. See Vernant 1981: 16.

<sup>18</sup> On the validity of reading livers see the ironic comments of Cicero, *De diu.* 2.28.

<sup>19</sup> See P.S.I. X 1178 (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2107) and P. Ross. *Georg.* I 21 (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2108), 2<sup>nd</sup> c.; P. Gen. inv. 161 (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2106, LDAB 8895), 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> c.; P. Amh. II 14 (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2104), 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>20</sup> On Philochorus, cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.21.134 l. 6; Suda f 441 s.v. *Philóchoros* = FGrH T3b, 328T1 where he is defined as "seer and hieroskopos" (μάντις καὶ ἱεροσκόπος); Scholion to Euripides' *Alc.* 968 etc., see also Montero 1997: 152; Dillery 2005: 221. On Demon, see FGrH T3b, 327 T2.

<sup>21</sup> See various sentences relating to the promoters of sacrifice in P.S.I. X 1178 (τοῖς θύουσιν l. 7, τὸν θύοντα l. 16).

ἀγα][θὸς δὲ κ]ἄν **αἰδοῖ** εἰσὶν ἀνδρὸς ἢ παιδός· ἰσχὺν / γὰρ καὶ κράτ[ος ση]μαίνει ἔσεσθαι τοῖς θύουσιν. (*P.S.I.* X 1178, Fragment I, ll. 6–7)

It is good if it resembles the **sexual organ** of a man or a child, for it signifies that the sacrificers will have strength and might. (Transl. Furley-Gysemergh 2015: 73)

A liver lobe looking closely like a man or child's penis signifies strength. This illustrates the like-to-like principle existing between microcosm and macrocosm and defining the prerequisites for the interpretation of sacrificial divination, where the victim's organ is seen to mirror the universe on a smaller scale. The liver is seen as a *homunculus*.<sup>22</sup> Hence, we also read of the “head” (Greek *kephalé*, Latin *caput iocineris*), “feet” (*pódes*), “chest” (*stêthos*) within the liver.<sup>23</sup> This thinking applied also to the bilateral division between the right and left sides.<sup>24</sup>

In ancient Greek divination, the penis was also considered not only as the subject of oneiric visions or as a resemblance to a hepatic lobe but also as an organ in its own right. It was notoriously a material source of prognostication in palmomancy, that is, quiver-divination. This is a predictive method of interpreting spasms, tremors and involuntary movements of every bodily part.<sup>25</sup> A fourth century ce palmomantic papyrus from the John Rylands Library of Manchester, a pocket-book of Late Antiquity we have the following prognostics for a quivering penis:

**Αἰδοῖον** ἐὰν ἄλληται, πολ-  
λὰ ἀποβάλλει ὁ τοιοῦτος  
ἔχων δὲ τέκνα γηροβο-  
σκηθή(σεται), ἐν δανίοις δὲ  
ὑπάρχων ἀποδώσει.

**Βάλανος** ἢ ἐπιδερμὶς  
ἐὰν ἄλληται, εὐφρασίαν  
δηλοῖ γυναικὶ δὲ [[κε]] κέρ-  
δος μετὰ νόγου δηλοῖ. (*CPG* 2 = *P. Ryl.* I 28 lines 41–49 ed. Costanza: 56)

If the **penis** quivers, this person will have a great loss, he will have children but he will grow old and he will repay his debts. If the **glans** or the skin around it quivers, it denotes joy, but for the woman it signals gain with blame.<sup>26</sup>

The first phallic prognostic is definitely ill-omened. It echoes Artemidorus' idea (see *Oneir.* Book V 15) of a loss or failure suffered in old age. A fully favoured woman is associated with the spasm of the glans from the remark that she will enjoy a financial gain resulting from the blame. Here, it refers to social blame, which was regularly predicted in the case of women, girls of marriageable age and widows particularly exposed to male violence as well as prejudice.<sup>27</sup> In light of this, a reprehensible gain announced to the woman in our palmomantic papyrus might imply sexual misconduct on her part.

Quiver-literature is also attested by medieval manuscripts and printed books of the sixteenth century. In the greatest version of medieval palmomancy, the diviner says:

<sup>22</sup> Hephaestio, 3.6.12: τὸ δὲ δεξιὸν μέρος τοῦ σπλάγγνου προσεῖκει τῷ ὑπὲρ γῆν ἡμισφαιρίῳ, τὸ δὲ εὐώνυμον τῷ ὑπὸ γῆν. Hübner 2003: 6 puts out the connection between the sides of entrails in a sacrificial victim and the visible, that is, the right side, and the invisible, that is, the left hemisphere, given by Hephaestio.

<sup>23</sup> For Ancient and modern definitions of hepatic parts, cf. Hephaestio 3.6.11–17, quoted and discussed by Pérez Jiménez 2005: 168–73 (without reference to Greek papyri on hieroscopy).

<sup>24</sup> On differences between propitious and unpropitious side, according to various diviners and interpreters of hieroscopy, see Hippocrates, *Morb. Ac.*, 3= 2.240, 10–244, 1 Littré = 39.12–20 Joly καὶ ἐν ἱεροσκοπίῃ τὰ τοιαῦτα εὖροι τις ἂν ἄλλα ἐπ' ἄλλοισιν' ἀλλ' ἔνιοι τῶν μαντίων τὰναντία τουτέων. For the liver at the sacrificial moment as a 'world's mirror', at whose surface the priest had to find the see of deities in places rigidly oriented and corresponding each other, see Bloch 1963: 52.

<sup>25</sup> See Ruelle 1908: 137–141; Diels 1908: 7; Halliday 1913: 172–183; Hopfner 1928: 1279; Id. 1949: 259–262; Mega 1942: 118–120; Costanza 2009a: 9–11; Id. 2019: 78–80.

<sup>26</sup> For the metaphoric use of the this term drawn from botany and first referring to oak's acorn, see Skoda 1988: 161–163.

<sup>27</sup> See Costanza 2019: 88–89.

**Βάλανος** ἀλλομένη δούλω εἰς Ἀφροδίτην ἐλθεῖν δηλοῖ. (= *versio* A § 126 *CPG*, p. 136)

The **glans** quivering denotes pleasure of Venus for the slave.

In the following predictions of *versio* A, the diviner interprets the predictive meaning of quivering testicles:

128 Ὁρχις δεξιὸς ἀλλόμενος βίου καὶ τέκνων ἐπίκτησιν δηλοῖ.

129 Ὁρχις εὐώνυμος ἀλλόμενος εὐωχίαν καὶ γυναικὸς ὠφέλειαν δηλοῖ. (= *versio* A, *CPG*, p. 136)

128 The right testicle quivering denotes acquisition of life and sons.

129 The left testicle quivering denotes a rich meal and pleasures of a woman.

In the second largest recension of medieval quiver-books the matter of the spasm of the penis comes up again:

**Αἰδοῖον** πάλλον περὶ τέκνων χαρὰν δηλοῖ. (*versio* B 110 (p. 159))

The penis quivering denotes joy for children.

As already seen in Artemidorus' oneirocritic rules of interpretation, the penis is linked with one's children, because it is the organ for procreation. Joy is also indicated by a quivering glans:

**Βάλανος** ἢ ἐπιδερμὶς πάλλουσα εὐφρασίαν δηλοῖ. (*versio* B 112, *CPG*, p. 159)

The glans or the skin around it quivering denotes joy.

For the testicles, the prediction concerning the left is lost, while we have a good omen for the right:

113 Ὁρχις δεξιὸς πάλλων ἀγαθὸν σημαίνει.

114 < Ὁρχις εὐώνυμος ... > (*versio* B, *CPG*, p. 159)

113 The right testicle quivering signifies something good.

114 <And the left...>

Beside the major versions A, B, we know of the two shortest and latest recensions of medieval times (C, D), where the demotic evolution of Greek language clearly influences the linguistic facies. In Version C assigned in the manuscript from Vienna to Hermes Trismegistus, there are no predictions relating either to the penis or the testicles and genitals. May this be a sign of a censored description about bodily quivers in Byzantine times? In other words, may we deduce that the author of this compilation consciously deleted any reference to sexual organs in his final arrangement? Or is it only the result of textual tradition from Late Antiquity to Byzantine times to have removed phallic omens in this version?

Anyway, the other late version D quotes a prognostic regarding both testicles (p. 190) with the addition of a preliminary paragraph concerning their upper part, according to a previous distinction usual in Greek anatomy of Imperial times:<sup>28</sup>

71 Τὸ ὑποκάτω τῶν ὄρχεων, ψόγον διὰ γυναικὸς δηλοῖ.

72 Ὁρχις δεξιὸς εἰάν ἄλληται, πρὸς ὀλίγον λύπην δηλοῖ.

73 Ὁρχις εὐώνυμος εἰάν ἄλληται, ἀγαθὸν δηλοῖ. (Ruf. Eph. *De corp. hum. appell.*, 106 p. 13 Clinch)

71 The lower part of testicles, denotes blame because of a woman.<sup>29</sup>

72 If the right testicle quivers, it denotes grief over a short time.

73 If the left testicle quivers, it denotes a felicitous event.

This being attested for quiver-books, it is interesting to remark that the man is also evident as a *mundus minor* in a later prophetic process also relating to body divination. We must take in account elaeomancy, that is, the study of natural bodily moles (Greek *elaia*, Latin *naevus*) for divinatory purposes (*ἐλαιοσκοπία*) in the realm of physiognomy. In this case, the diviner deduces the future destiny of individuals by observing moles on any of the parts of the body. Similarly, he also foresees their moral and psychological characteristics. A treatise *On body moles* (*De naevis*) of early

<sup>28</sup> It opposes lower and upper part of this organ: τῶν δὲ διδύμων τὸ μὲν ἐπάνω κεφαλή, τὸ δὲ κάτω πυθμὴν, see Skoda 1988: 167.

<sup>29</sup> In *Versio* D, an article concerning the upper part of testicles is possibly lost before § 71.

Byzantine times is attributed to Ps.-Melampus. Under this name, we know a work founded on detailed elaeoscopical conjectures discussed in an ordered pattern from head to toe (*a capite ad calcem*). For every mole (*elaia*), the author offers two distinct answers, one for men and the other for women. This tract was popular enough to be published in the mid-sixteenth century<sup>30</sup>. A translation into Demotic Greek also circulated, proving the survival of such superstitions in Modern Greece.<sup>31</sup> It is also known that an anonymous reworking of this treatise, where the predictions are listed in two different sequences according to sex, starting with prophecies for men and then for women.<sup>32</sup>

If we analyze elaeomantic prognostics, we may deduce the relation between the mole (*ἐλαία*) and its predictive consequences. So, if someone has a mole on his lips or his stomach, he will be a very greedy person, that is, he will serve as an example of *πολυφαγία* (gluttony). If he has moles on his hands, indeed, of *πολυτεχνία* (handiness), he will be excellent in every manual labour. Subsequently, if someone has a mole on his penis, it should forecast, that he will give birth to males (*ἀρρενογονία*).

Version B On moles (*Ἐλαιοσκοπίων <ἀρρένων καὶ θηλέων>*) refers to male consulters:

Εἰ δὲ ἐν τῷ **αἰδοίῳ**, ἀρρενογόνος. (*Ἀρρένων* § 13 a)

If there is a mole on his sexual organ, he will procreate male sons.

Apart from moles on the penis, we observe metaphorical values in accordance with current folklore. This is noteworthy for moles on the nose. This part of the face is meant in its literal sense in versio B § 5a in the series for men. Subsequently, it gives a prognostic of having a good fragrance (*εὐοσμία*):

Εἰ δὲ ἐν τῇ **ῥίνι**, εὐοσμος ἔσται καὶ καλοθελής.

If he has a mole on his nose, he will be perfumed and of good will.

But there is a wholly different idea in the versio A. Here, a clear phallic transposition is operating, given that the nose is conceived as a second phallus. The Pseudo-Melampous forecasts:

§5 a) Ἐὰν ἦ εἰς τὴν **ῥίνα** τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ ἡ χροία αὐτῆς ἔσται πυρός, ἀκόρεστος ἔσται τῆς συνουσίας, ἐπειδὴ καὶ εἰς τὸ **κρυπτὸν** ἐλαίαν ἔχει. b) Ἐὰν ἦ εἰς τὴν **ῥίνα** ἢ εἰς τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν τῆς γυναικός, ὁμοίως ἀποβήσεται τῷ ἀνδρὶ, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ εἰς τὸ **κρυπτὸν** ἐλαίαν ἔχει καὶ ἀκόρεστος γενήσεται τῆς συνουσίας.

5 a) If it is on the **nose** of the man, and its colour is of fire, he will be insatiable for sexual intercourse if he also has a mole on his **sexual organ**. b) If it is on the **nose** or the eye of the woman, it will be the same with her, because she too has a mole on her **sexual organ** and she will also become insatiable for sexual intercourse.

Correspondingly, the modern Greek translation prophesies:

a) **Μίτιν**· ἐὰν εἰς τὴν **μύτην** τοῦ ἀνδρὸς καὶ τὸ χρώμα του ἦναι κόκκινον, δὲν χορταίνει συνουσίαν, διότι ἔχει καὶ εἰς τὸ **ἀπόκρυφον** μέλος ἐλαίαν. b) Τὸ αὐτὸ παθαίνει ἢ γυναῖκα, ἐὰν ἔχη εἰς τὴν **μίτι<ν>** ἢ εἰς τὸ μάτι. (= *versio C On Moles* § 4)

a) The **nose**: if it is on the **nose** of the man and its colour is red, he will not be satiated of sexual intercourse, because he has a mole also on his **sexual organ**. b) The woman suffers the same, if she has a mole on her **nose** or on her eye.

<sup>30</sup> At first by Camillo Peruschi in the margin of his *editio princeps* of Aelian, *Varia Historia*, Rome 1545. The last editor is still Franz 1780, 501–08. English Translation by Irby-Keyser-Keyser 2002: 343–344, who considers, however, Melampus, as an actual author of Hellenistic times.

<sup>31</sup> It is preserved by Ms. *Athen. Bibl. Nat.* 1275 (y. 1862), fol. 50: Περὶ τῆς σημασίας τῶν τοῦ ἐλαίπων τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὅπου ἔχει εἰς τὸ σῶμα, another version is to be read in a code of the same collection (1350, fol. 77<sup>v</sup>); see Delatte 1924: 101–103; Mega 1942: 155–162; Greenfield 1995: 144; Costanza 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Tract *On moles of males and females* (*ἀρρένων καὶ θηλέων*), preserved by Ms. *Par. Gr.* 2381, fol. 56: Ἐλαιοσκοπί(ον) ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν; *Laur. Plut.* 28.14, fol. 301<sup>v</sup>: Ἐλαιοσκοπίαι <ἀρρένων καὶ θηλέων>. Cf. *Scor.* I Φ 5, fol. 411: Τοῦ σοφωτάτου Ἀκτυαρίου λόγος περὶ ἐλαιῶν, *inc.* τὸν περὶ συνθέσεως ἐλαιῶν.

The divinatory treatise *On moles*, versio A asserts that someone will be insatiable of sexual intercourse (ἀκόρεστος ... τῆς συνουσίας), if he or she has a mole on his or her nose, given the simile of the nose identified with the phallus:

Mentula tam magna est, quantus tibi, Papyle, nasus

...] Vt possis, quotiens arrigis, olfacere. (Martial, Book 6. 36)

His tool was large and so was his nose,

...Papyrus could smell it whenever it rose. (Transl. F. Pitt-Kethley, in Sullivan-Whigham 1987: 235)

The association between nose and *péos* corresponds to a very common popular concept. This is an extremely productive idea. In fact the penis is seen as the other nose. In Greek tradition, this folklore goes back at least to the Iambic poet of the sixth century BCE Hipponax of Ephesus (see Fr. 78. 14 West, see 22 and 118. 1 West).<sup>33</sup>

We would not believe that the Byzantine writer *On moles* hidden under the pseudonym of Melampous was aware of such poetical antecedents. Anyway, we remark that the art of prognostication by moles draws its prophecies from the same frame of mind employed by Hipponax and Martial in their poems.

In versio A, further elaeoscopic prophecies concern moles found on the penis. There are omina given to men and women with not further distinction (23ab) and another depending on male or female sex of consulters (24 a, b):

23 a, b) Ἐὰν εἰς τὸ **κρυπτόν**, ἄπληστοι ἀπὸ τῆς συνουσίας ἔσονται.

23 a, b) If there is a mole on their **sexual organ**, they will be insatiable of sexual intercourse.

24 a) Ἐὰν εἰς τὸ **φυσικόν**, ὁ μὲν ἀνὴρ ἀρσενογόνος ἔσται. b) Ἡ δὲ γυνή, τοῦναντίον.

24 a, b) If there is a mole on his **penis**, the man will procreate male children, b) The opposite, if it is on the sex of a woman.

Here, the modern Greek versio C translates:

21 a, b) **Κρυφὰ μέλη**· ἐὰν εἰς **τὰ κρυφὰ μέρη** (i.e. μέλη) ἔχουν, ποτὲ δὲν χορταίνουσι συνουσίαν.

22 a, b), **Φύσιν** τοὺς ἐπάνω· ἐὰν τὴν ἔχουσι ἐπάνω εἰς τὴν **φύσιν** τοὺς, ὁ μὲν ἀνὴρ γίνεται ὡσὰν γυναικα καὶ ἡ γυνή ὡς ἄνδρας.

This notion is echoed in the treatise *De Ursae tentigine et naso* (*Upon the lechery of Ursa and her nose*) by the Humanist poet Antonio Beccadelli the Palermitan:

Si multus multae est nasus tentiginis index,

Ursae tentigo tenditur usque ad pedes.

Quin si multa ampli nasi tentigo sit index,

Nasus ad usque tuum tenditur, Ursa, genu. (*Hermaphroditus* (1425) VIII)

If a big nose is indicative of a great lechery,

Ursa's lechery goes just to her feet.

But, if a great lechery is an indication of a big nose,

your nose, Ursa, is down to your knee.

This joke develops the idea already attested by mole-divination that a big nose is indicative of an insatiable desire for sexual intercourse, a very ancient idea that persists today.

Finally, the phallus seems to play an important role in Greek divinatory treatises with undeniable overtones linked with well spread folkloric ideas. Reading prophecies relating to male sexual organs allows us to understand better the thinking on this subject in Ancient times. In fact, diviners were obliged to delve into the thoughts of their clients in order to initiate a satisfactory interactive process. The results of our enquiry confirm how handbooks on Ancient divination usefully overstate common beliefs. In sum, an educated theorist such as the dream-interpreter Artemidorus as well as the professionals on moles-predictions in early Byzantine times share similar procedures for

<sup>33</sup> See the enquiry about this topic in Degani 1980: 514 = Id. 2004: 82; Id. 1998: 13–15 = Id. 2004: 165–167.

interpreting the omens with regard to the very productive association of ideas connected to the phallus.

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