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Review of Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture, by P.C. Miller

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vocabulary is so rich and allusive that word-for-word equivalence is rarely satisfactory. However, McCarthy's translation, which tries to steer a middle course between an absolutely literal reproduction and a smooth English version, has yielded a clear and recognizable indication of the Syriac beneath it. For the still-missing folios, McCarthy translated Leloir's Latin of the Armenian version.

This volume is useful, then, for two reasons: it has added to the translation of Ephrem now available in English, and it has provided the first English translation of a work through which darkly the Diatessaron can be seen.

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ROBIN DARLING YOUNG

Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture. By PATRICIA COX MILLER. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994. xii + 273. \$39.50.

The history of scholarship demonstrates that every generation appropriates the work of previous generations and then builds upon it. Much late-twentieth-century scholarship on early Christianity has moved from philological and theological concerns, which still play a great role, toward a re-creation of the personal world of ancient figures. Some of this looks back to the beginning of this century and the establishment of the social sciences; much of it has a more recent base in the maxim that there is no unhistorical statement, no view which can claim to represent reality, but rather only the constantly shifting reality of the one perceiving. Yet every individual stands within a culture, and often personal perceptions can lead the researcher into larger questions about a culture. This current volume demonstrates how those most personal of events, dreams, can yield an understanding of a culture.

Like so many rewarding volumes, this one presents familiar material to the reader but shows it in a different light. The ancient world left us many famous accounts of dreams—Jacob's ladder, Pharaoh's fat and gaunt cows, the angel's warning to the Magi, Constantine's Chi-Rho—all occurrences which caused the recipients to act decisively on important matters. Since the import of the topic can be taken for granted, Miller takes a twofold approach. First, she examines ancient oneiric theories: how did the ancients approach the understanding of dreams? Second, she considers several famous dreamers.

Her important first chapter establishes that in ancient cultures dreams constituted a form of knowledge: "For Homer, the dream appears to be a kind of technique for overcoming epistemological uncertainty that nevertheless participates in that very dynamic" (p. 18). Inevitably, later thinkers modified the Homeric view, distinguishing between true and false dreams or emphasizing that dreams could be literally ambivalent, being both true and false. When the Neoplatonists used the same imagery to describe the soul as to describe dreams, their metaphysical significance joined the epistemological.

Miller lists and explains various ancient theories of dreams (chapter 2), for example, their origins in psychobiological causes or in demonic and angelic activity. She next (chapter 3) considers ancient interpretive theories of dreams. Emphasizing their relation to the larger culture, Miller argues that "These oneiric strategies were firmly rooted in ordinary experiences . . . which were conceptualized in terms of relational networks linking the self with social and cosmological arenas" (p. 75). This is a particularly informative chapter, linking Artemidorus, Ovid, Macrobius, Philo, and some Christian allegorists. At times the author seems reluctant to give up her method. For example, in discussing a rabbinic anecdote about a dream with twenty-four meanings, she says that "its images have an astounding plasticity, that is, an astounding signifying potential" (p.74). Perhaps, but could not so many meanings signify that it really had none? She closes the first half of the book by discussing dreams and therapy, particularly the cult of Asclepius.

The second part of the book discusses six dreamers in five chapters: Hermas, Aelius Aristides, Perpetua, Jerome, and two Gregorys, Nazianzen and Nyssa, in one chapter. Five diverse chapters cannot be treated individually in this review, but Miller's method appears best in her analysis of Perpetua's dreams. Noting that the idea world of Perpetua's day was patriarchal, she suggests that this is why even women martyrs were portrayed as virile, an attempt to denigrate their bodies which had suffered for Christ: "As opposed to these various strategies that deflect a reading of Perpetua's diary as a woman's testimony, I suggest that, when it is so read, it expresses the plight of a woman caught in the cross-currents of a theological debate in which sexual politics played a prominent role" (p. 175). Thus some of the less virile male images in Perpetua's dreams, such as the "sinister shepherd, cancerous brother" (p. 182), suggest that oneirically the dominant male trope can be embraced by Perpetua because she can use it to express her otherness from these male figures, her sexual worth. It is a brilliant analysis.

This is a challenging book; no doubt this reviewer will not be the only reader who has to go back over some sections. But it is also an important book on what the author demonstrates is an important topic when analyzed by an appropriate methodology.

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Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism. By JAROSLAV PELIKAN. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993. xvi + 368 pp. \$40.00.

This book derives from Pelikan's Gifford Lectures on natural theology (1992–1993). Pelikan follows and transcends the contributions of his predecessors Etienne Gilson, Karl Barth, Werner Jaeger, Arthur Darby Nock, and