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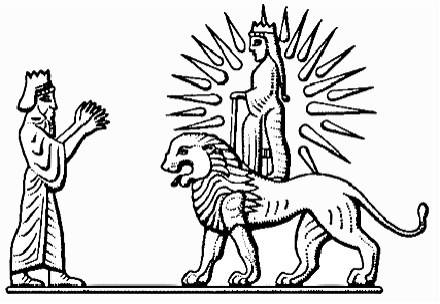

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"Dreaming and the Ideology of Mantics: Homer and Ancient Near Eastern Oneiromancy"

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Dreaming and the Ideology of Mantics: Homer and Ancient Near Eastern Oneiromancy*

Near Eastern influence on Greek literature has been the subject of increasing scholarly interest in the last few decades. The works of W. Burkert[1] and of others[2] have done a great deal to "re-orient" our understanding of Greek literature by considering it in the larger context of the ancient Mediterranean world. Martin West's famous remark that "Greece is part of Asia; Greek Literature is Near Eastern literature,"[3] encapsulates this approach. While a great deal of prior comparative work in this area has consisted primarily of the cataloguing of examples of possible influence and exchange, more recently scholars have begun to move toward a more complete understanding of what K. A. Raaflaub refers to as "...the preconditions that made them possible and the limits and exact modalities of transmission and effect."[4]

In this essay, I shall adopt Raaflaub's direction, at least in part, by examining the use of divinatory wordplay in the exegesis of dreams in Mesopotamian and early Greek literature. I shall restrict myself to discussing the interpretation of only those dreams which we could call "symbolic," i.e., those dreams of unclear meaning that require interpretation. They are the opposite of the so-called "message," dreams in which a dream figure delivers a missive that requires no interpreter.

Parallels between Near Eastern and

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[1] See, e.g., Walter Burkert, "Homerstudien und Orient," in Joachim Latacz (ed.), *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung: Rückblick und Ausblick* (Colloquium Rauricum, 2; Stuttgart and Leipzig), 155-181; *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, 1992).

[2] See, e.g., M. C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden, 1967), and more recently, "RDMN/RHADAMANTHYS and the Motif of Selective Immortality," in Manfred Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper (eds.), *"Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf": Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient: Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70.* (AOAT, 250; Münster, 1998), 55-89; Robert Rollinger, "Altorientalische Motivik in der frühgriechischen Literatur am Beispeil der homerischen Epen. Elemente des Kampfes in der Ilias und in der altorientalischen Literatur (nebst Überlegungen zur Präsenz altorientalischer Wanderpriester im früharchaischen Griechenand)," in Christoph Ulf (ed.), *Wege zur Genese griechischer Identität: Die Bedeutung der früharchaischen Zeit* (Berlin, 1996), 156-311; Stephanie Dalley and A. T. Reyes, "Mesopotamian Contact and Influence in the Greek World: 1. To the Persian Conquest," in Stephanie Dalley (ed.), *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford, 1998), 85-106.

[3] M. L. West, *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), 31.

[4] K. A. Raaflaub, "Influence, Adaptation, and Interaction: Near Eastern and Early Greek Political Thought," in Sanna Aro and R. M. Whiting (eds.), *The Heirs of Assyria: Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8-11, 1998* (Melammu Symposia, I; Helsinki, 2000), 54.

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Greek message dreams, have received some scholarly attention[5] and have been numerous enough for West to assert: "It is not easy to avoid the conclusion that at some stage of its history the Greek epic tradition has been strongly influenced by contacts with the Eastern tradition."[6] Therefore, a comparative study of Greek and Near Eastern symbolic dreams is a logical next step.[7]

My comparison will consist of two parts: first, the punning interpretation of symbolic dreams in Near Eastern and Greek omen texts; and second, the punning interpretation of symbolic dreams as reflected in Near Eastern and early Greek literature. Throughout the paper I shall comment on the possible preconditions, limits, and modalities of transmission for the punning hermeneutic.

Part I. The punning interpretation of symbolic dreams in Near Eastern and Greek omen texts.

In a monograph on the exegesis of dreams in the ancient Near East, I re-examine all extant Mesopotamian dream oracles for evidence of what I will call the punning hermeneutic.[8] My research has turned up dozens of examples, but a smaller sampling will suffice to demonstrate.[9]

> If a man dreams that he is eating a **raven** (*arbu*); he will have **income** (*irbu*).
>
> If a man dreams he is eating human **flesh** (*šêru*): he will have great **riches** (*šarû*).[10]
>
> If (in a dream) a person goes to **Laban** (*La-ba-an*); he will **build** a house (DÙ-*u[š] = ibanûš*).[11]
>
> If a man dreams that he is travelling to **Idran** (*ID-ra-an = Á-ra-an*); he will free himself from a **crime** (*aran*).[12]
>
> If one gives him **bird "oil"** (Ì + GIŠ MUŠEN); they will shout '**Watch out! Watch out**!' (*i-ṣur i-ṣur KA-ú*).[13]
>
> If (someone) has given him *miḫru*-**wood**; he shall have no **rival** (*māḫiru*).
>
> [If] one gives him the **head** (SAG) of a pick-axe; his **head** (SAG.DU) [will be cut off].
>
> [If] he pours his urine into a **fish pond** (TÚL): he will **lose** (ḪA.A) his property.[14]

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[5] A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of the Assyrian Dream Book* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Volume 46/3 [1956]; Philadelphia, 1956), 209.

[6] M. L. West, "The Rise of the Greek Epic," *JHS* 108 (1988), 169.

[7] The problems posed by the commonly accepted typology nothwithstanding. On such difficulties see Scott B. Noegel, "Dreams and Dream Interpreters in Mesopotamia and in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)," in Kelly Bulkeley (ed.), *Dreams and Dreaming: A Reader in Religion, Anthropology, History, and Psychology* (Hampshire, 2001), 45-71; *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (forthcoming).

[8] See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*.

[9] Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 269, 272.

[10] X: x+13 (K.6663 + 8300).

[11] A play here on *labānu* "make bricks," was noted by Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 268, n. 34.

[12] IX: rev. ii, x+21 (K.2582). In addition to the paronomasia, note that the pun is also visual and based on identical signs (with the exception of Á = ID in the protasis).

[13] The play here is on the word "bird" (*iṣṣuru*).

[14] VII: rev. ii, x+15-16. The apodosis ḪA.A = *ḫalāqu* "lose," appears to have been associated with the protasis' TÚL = *burtu* "well, fish pond," via a learned pun between its component signs, ḪA and A. The former sign, when read as KU_6 means *nunu* "fish," i.e., a creature living in a fish pond. The latter sign A also represents *mû* "water." *CAD* B 335, s.v. *burtu*.

> If he goes to **Lubda** (*Lu-úb-da*^{ki}): **imprisonment** (*me-si-ru*) will seize [him].[15]

> If he seizes a **fox** (KA_5.A = *šēlibu*), he will seize a **Lamassu** (AN.KAL), but if he seizes a fox in his **hand** (ŠU), and it escapes, he will have seized a Lamassu, but it also will escape from his **hand** (ŠU).[16]

Mesopotamian oneirocritic practices appear to have had a wide-ranging influence. A. Leo Oppenheim, in his seminal work on the subject, suggested that the New Kingdom Egyptian dream oracles showed the imprint of Mesopotamian techniques in their format and in some details, a remark now supported by additional Egyptological research.[17] Though he does not discuss it in depth, I point out that both the Egyptian dream book frequently displays the punning hermeneutic. Three examples will illustrate.

> If a man has a dream in which he peels off his **finger nail** (*be'ek*). Bad omen. The **work** (*be'ek*) of his hands will be seized.

> If a man has a dream in which he offers **incense** (*snṯr)* to the god. Bad omen. The rage of the god (*nṯr)* is against him (i.e., he is incensed!).

> If a man has a dream in which he **uncovers** (*kf'w*) his **derriere** (*pḥwy*). Bad omen. He will come to an **end** (*kf'w pḥwy*).

More recently, Mark Geller[18] has seen similar Mesopotamian oneirocritic influence in the format and some protases of some Talmudic dream reports.[19] Here again the dream reports reveal the presence of the punning heremeutic.

> Bar Kappara reports a dream to Rabbi in which some people told him "You will die in the month of **'Adar** and not see **Nisan**." Rabbi interprets this dream: "You will die with **honor** (*'adratāh*), and not come into **temptation** (*nisāyôn*)."[20]

> Bar Kappara reports a dream in which his **nose** (*'ap*) falls off. As Rabbi interprets his dream: "**Heated anger** (*ḥarōn 'ap*) has been removed from you."[21]

> One who sees a **reed** (*qāneh*) in a dream will **acqire** (*qeneh*) understanding.[22]

> If one sees an **elephant** (*pīl*) in a dream, **wonders** (*pelā'ōt*) will be wrought for him.[23]

Though some scholars have emphasized similarities in format and detail when demonstrating Mesopotamian in-

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[15] IX: obv. i, y+13 (*Sm* 29 + 79-7-8, 94). Here it is the LU sign which logographically suggests itself as DAB = *kâlu* "imprison, hold, contain." Similarly, the ÚB sign (=KU) represents the verb *nadû*, one of whose many meanings is "put in prison, fetter, cage." *CAD* N/1 86, s.v. *nadû*. These equations are bolstered visually as well by the signs LU and DAB which are identical, and by the ÚB sign which differs from LU and DAB only in that it lacks a vertical wedge on its right side.

[16] If "fox" is read syllabically as *še₇-líb-bu*, the same signs can be read as (A).AN.KAL-*u*, i.e., "Lamassu." Moreover, though ŠU here means *qātu* "hand," one lexical lists shows us that ^{d}LAMMA = ^{d}ŠU. See Scott B. Noegel, "Fox on the Run: Catch a Lamassu by the Pun," *NABU* (1995), 101-2.

[17] See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*.

[18] M. J. Geller, "The Survival of Babylonian Wissenschaft in Later Tradition," in Sanna Aro and R. M. Whiting (eds.), *The Heirs of Assyria: Proceedings of the Opening Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Tvärminne, Finland, October 8-11, 1998* (Melammu Symposia, I; Helsinki, 2000), 1-6.

[19] For the role of wordplay in Rabbinic exegesis in general see Isaac Heineman, דרכי האגדה (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1970), 103-130. See also BT, Berakhot 56b, 57a; Baba Kama 55a. For a brief discussion of Talmudic dreams see Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study of Folk Religion* (New York, 1974). For a complete list of dream puns in the Talmud see Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*.

[20] BT, *Berakhot*, 56b.

[21] BT, *Berakhot*, 56b.

[22] BT, *Berakhot*, 56b.

[23] BT, *Berakhot*, 56b-57a.

fluence on these other dream collections, I would suggest that the presence of the punning hermeneutic also should be taken into consideration. We need not look for specific punning parallels, but rather simply the presence of the punning hermeneutic itself, since it implies the existence of a learned system of hermeneutic principles or approaches. Therefore, the Egyptian and Talmudic dream oracles, both in format and in their ubiquitous employment of the punning hermeneutic, uniquely evidence the chronological and geographic pervasiveness of Mesopotamian oneirocritic practices.

With this background in mind, I turn to what to my knowledge is the only extant ancient dream manual in Greek, the *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus of Daldis. Though a product of the second century CE, the *Oneirocritica* nevertheless represents the apex of a long oneirocritic tradition, one which it collects and embodies. Artemidorus himself cites numerous dream interpreters and their works by name. He also consorted with marketplace diviners and studied every available work on the subject. Thus, the *Oneirocritica* is a fitting text with which to compare the Near Eastern dream manuals.

The ancient hermeneutic traditions which the *Oneirocritica* represents employ various interpretive principles according to classifications that appear generally in the earlier Near Eastern dream materials. These patterns include taking into account the dreamer's occupation, a distinction between the right and the left, and a polarity between dreams and their meanings, i.e., if one dreams a bad thing, it means a good thing. As in Near Eastern sources, the Greeks use the word "to see" to describe a dream experience, and thus, both peoples equate dreams with visions. With regard to literary "message dreams" we also find in both sources a likening of sleep to wind,[24] and an association of dreams with the underworld. The latter appears already in Homer's *Odyssey* 24:11-12 in which the souls of the dead are taken by Hermes past the Gates of Helios and the "Land of Dreams" (δῆμος ὀνείρων).[25] Also similar is a distinction between message dreams and symbolic dreams, a belief in the divine origin of dreams, the topos of a dream figure standing by the head of one's bed, and a preoccupation with the time in which a dream occurs.

Moreoever, like the scholars of the ancient Near East, Artemidorus employs word plays of all sorts, including *notariqon*[26] and *gematria*, two interpretive strategies that consider the anagramic and numerical values of words, respectively.[27] The numerological strategies,

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[24] Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 216.

[25] In *Iliad* 23:65ff. records the appearance of the soul of Patrocolus in a dream. In *Iliad* 16:672 Sleep and Death are twin brothers.

[26] For *Notariqon* see Artemidorus Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*. Transl. Robert J. White (Noyes Classical Studies; Park Ridge, NJ., 1975), 196, where a military commander in the Jewish War in Cyrene dreamt that the letters *iota*, *kappa*, and *theta* were inscribed on his sword. These letters were taken to represent the Jews, Cyrenaens, and death. For rabbinic practice and the Bible, see Stanley Gevirtz, "Abram's 318," *IEJ* 19 (1969), 110-13. Compare this with the gematria found in Mesopotamian colophons and god lists, e.g., Erle Leichty, "The Colophon," in *Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim, June 7, 1964* (Chicago, 1964), 152-3 and Stephen J. Lieberman, "A Mesopotamian Background for the So-called Aggadic 'Measures' of Biblical Hermeneutics," *HUCA* 58 (1987), 174-6. The recent publication by Laurie E. Pearce, "The Number-Syllabary Texts," *JAOS* 116 (1996), 453-74, doubtless will help to uncover additional examples.

[27] See also, Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 166-7, 178, n. 13, 196, 223, n. 22, 232, 245, n. 7, for a discussion of the numerical values of words.

which Frans Dornseiff long ago suggested were Mesopotamian in origin,[28] remind us of Artemidorus' understanding of dreams as texts, as he notes: "For it makes no difference whether one says the number itself or a word whose letters indicate the number."[29] Three examples will demonstrate the diversity of Artemidorus' punning interpretive strategies.

> A weasel (γαλῆ) that appears in a dream represents a lawsuit (δίκη), since both words, when treated as numbers, equal forty-two (3 + 1 + 30 + 8 = 42// 4 + 10 + 20 + 8 = 42/) (*gematria*).[30]
>
> A penis (μήδεα) in a dream can signify the making of important plans (μήδεα)... (polysemy).[31]
>
> A wolf (λύκος) signifies a year (λυκάβας) because of its name (paronomasia).[32]

Another feature found in Artemidorus and in Near Eastern dream oracles, is the use of literary and mythological texts as interpretive templates. For example, Artemidorus interprets the appearance of "horses" in a dream as denoting "ships," since Homer's *Odyssey* 4:708 refers to ships as "horses of the sea" (ἀλὸς ἵπποι).[33] Artemidorus similarly asserts: "That dreams are not entirely unrelated to myths can be seen from this example... Heracles burned in a fire, so too a woman who dreamt she did the labors of Heracles."[34] If one quotes a book in a dream, the events of that text will come to pass in one's life as they unfolded in the text.[35] Thus, as with Near Eastern manuals, dreams are viewed as texts and symbolic dreams, as texts that require decipherment. As Artemidorus put it: "Whenever they (the gods) speak in riddles and do not speak plainly, you must attempt to solve the riddles."[36] This remark, of course, reminds us of the Near Eastern view expressed in Num 12:6-8.[37]

> When a prophet of Yahweh arises among you, I make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is trusted throughout my household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles...

Part 2. The punning interpretation of symbolic dreams as reflected in Near Eastern and early Greek literature.

The punning hermeneutic in Mesopotamia was not limited to dream interpretation. On the contrary, since punning appears originally to have been a mantic device, it appears in most of the other methods of Mesopotamian divination,

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[28] See, e.g., Frans Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig, 1925), and also the following additions to the subject. R. Hallo, "Über die griechischen Zahlbuchstaben und ihre Verbreitung," *ZDMG* 80 (1926), 55-67; "Zusätze zu Franz Dornseiff's Alphabet," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 23 (1925), 166-74; A. Bertholet, *Die Macht der Schrift in Glauben und Aberglauben* (Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, 1948/1; Berlin, 1950). Each noted in Lieberman, "A Mesopotamian Background for the So-called Aggadic 'Measures' of Biblical Hermeneutics," 167, n. 45.

[29] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 196.

[30] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 165, 178, n. 11.

[31] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 39.

[32] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 96, 142.

[33] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 46.

[34] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 202.

[35] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 210.

[36] Daldianus, *Oneirocritica*, 214.

[37] See similarly, Lieberman, "A Mesopotamian Background for the So-called Aggadic 'Measures' of Biblical Hermeneutics," 157-225; Tigay, "An Early Technique of Aggadic Exegesis," 169-189; Dornseiff, Franz, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (Leipzig, 1925); Scott B. Noegel, "*Atbash* in Jeremiah and Its Literary Sigificance," *JBQ* 24/2-4 (1996), 82-9, 160-6, 247-50.

from extispicy texts, to birth omens, magic stones, prophecy, astral magic, and the reading of birds.[38] In an extispicy texts, for example, we read:

> "If the station (a particular mark on the liver) is long (*arik*); the days of the ruler will be long (*irriku*)."[39]
>
> "If the 'reinforcement' (another well-defined portion of the liver) is thick (*ul-luṣ*); rejoicing (*ulluṣ libbi*) of the army."[40]

In the series of abnormal birth omens known as *Šummu Izbu* we find:

> "If a ewe gives birth to a lion, and it has matted hair (*malî*); a reign of mourning (*malî*); the land will be full of mourning (*malâ*); attack of the enemy."[41]

To cite one example from a Neo-Babylonian magical stone list I refer to the *aban arê* "eagle stone" which was employed as an amulet for pregnant women precisely because of the homonymity between *arû* "be pregnant" and *arû* "eagle." I could cite numerous others from a wide variety of divinatory disciplines.[42] Indeed, ancient Mesopotamian scholarly commentaries also bear witness to the derivation of esoteric meanings from texts via word play.[43] Though it certainly was not the only hermeneutic in existence, punning nevertheless served as one of the most pervasive divinatory hermeneutics throughout Mesopotamian history. The pervasiveness of this punning hermeneutic bolsters the words of S. Parpola.

> ...the crafts of these scholarly experts were to a large extent *complementary* and... their respective disciplines and fields represented parts of a larger whole, which I, in conformity with the native Mesopotamian terminology, propose to call "wisdom."[44]

This background informs W. Burkert's comment that these same experts, his itinerant "craftsmen of the sacred,"[45] transmitted their divinitory and purificatory skills, as well as elements of their mythological "wisdom" to the West,[46] where they impacted Greek literature.

> This impact is confirmed by extant passages of early Greek literature that clearly echo Mesopotamian classics... Just as in the case of liver divination, the literary borrowings seem to belong only to the last phase of Greek epic poetry; it is post-Bronze Age works such as *Enuma Elish* and *Erra* which have left their mark. It is precisely the Homeric epoch of Greece that is the epoch of the orientalizing revolution.[47]

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[38] See now the collection of essays in Scott B. Noegel (ed.), *Puns and Pundits: Wordplay in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Bethesda, MD, 2000).
[39] Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner*, 10.
[40] Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner*, 10.
[41] Leichty, *The Omen Series: Šumma Izbu*, 77, V:39. Noted also in Tigay, "An Early Technique of Aggadic Exegesis," 178, but as an example of Mesopotamian "parable, allegory, or symbol." This example more accurately belongs with Tigay's *remez* category.
[42] See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*.
[43] See, e.g., Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
[44] Parpola, "Mesopotamian Astrology and Astronomy as Domains of Mesopotamian 'Wisdom'," in Hannes D. Galter, ed., *Die Rolle der Astronomie in den Kulturen Mesopotamiens; Beiträge zum 3. Grazer Morgenländischen Symposium, 23.-27. September, 1991* (Grazer Morgenländische Studien, 3; Karl Franzons Universität, Kopernikusgasse 24; Graz, 1993), 52. The emphasis is the author's. It perhaps is no coincidence that the word חכם "wisdom" appears in Genesis only in connection with the mantic professionals of Egypt (Gen 41:8, 41:33).
[45] See, Walter Burkert, "Itinerant Diviners and Magicians: A Neglected Element in Cultural Contacts," in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Greek Renaissance of the Eigth Century B.C. Tradition and Innovation* (Proceedings of the Second International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 1-5 June 1981; Stockholm, 1983), 115-19.
[46] Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, 6.
[47] Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, 129.

Though Burkert does not mention it, the authors of these Mesopotamian classics were mantic professionals.[48] Indeed, the author of the Epic of Erra states in his opening that he received the entire text in a dream. The Epic of Gilgamesh was compiled by an exorcist, or perhaps *kalu* singer. To some degree, therefore, demonstrating Mesopotamian literary influence in early Greek literature is tantamount to demonstrating divinatory influence. In this regard West's depiction of the Greek bard is striking:

> We should probably envisage the IE poet-besides other functions such as invoking gods at sacrifices, and reciting magical incantations for various community needs-celebrating the noble qualities and heroic enterprises of the king and his ancestors...[49]

Indeed, we hear of the complementarity and inter-disciplinarity of Greek divinatory professionals, in the *Iliad* 1:62-63, where, Achilles equates, as with equal power, the soothsayer, omen readers, priest, prognosticator, and dream interpreter.[50] In the Mesopotamian world, this range of interdisciplinary mantic skills and their commonalities, explains why we find the word play hermeneutic portrayed accurately in Mesopotamian *literary* portrayals of dream interpretation. I offer a few examples to illustrate, each from the Epic of Gilgamesh.

In the Old Babylonian version, Gilgamesh dreams that a meteorite (*kiṣru*) fell from the sky on top (*ana ṣeri*) of him. His mother interprets the dream by way of word play. She asserts that he will meet one born of the steppeland (*ina ṣeri*) who will become the strength (*kiṣru*) of the god Ninurta. Both interpretations are confirmed shortly afterwards.

Gilgamesh's mother also employs a polysemous hermeneutic in the Assyrian version. After conveying his first dream in which he sees the *kiṣru ša* ^{d}*Anim* (I,v,28) or "meteorite," his mother offers an interpretation that derives from multiple readings of the word *kiṣru*. For example, she states *kīma kiṣru ša* ^{d}*Anim dunnuna emuqāšu* "like a *kiṣru* of Anu, so mighty is his strength" (I:iii,4). Here the words *dunnuna emuqāšu* "mighty is his strength," semantically play on another meaning of *kiṣru*, namely "strength."[51] She also asserts that his dream represents *dannu tap]pu mušezib [ibri]* "a strong commrade who rescues a friend" (I:vi,1), one who *lā innizebkā kâša* "will never forsake you" (I:vi,5). The verb *kaṣāru* can be written in Sumerian in several ways. One way in particular is with KÁD, a sign that in turn can be read *ezēbu* "forsake,"[52] the very verb that we have twice in her interpretation.

Elsewhere I have discussed two polysemous messages in Ea's secret warning to Utnapishtim.[53] Specifically, I examined XI:14: *šakan abubi ubla libbašunu ilāni rabûti* "the great gods set their hearts to *ubla* the deluge" and XI:26: *makkura zerma napišta bulliṭ* "spurn property, keep living beings alive." I

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[48] It is likely that many Israelite and Egyptian divinatory techniques were inherited from Mesopotamia. See, e.g., Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOTS, 142: Sheffield, 1994).

[49] West, "The Rise of the Greek Epic," 154.

[50] For a discussion of the similarities here to Greek epic see Rollinger, "Altorientalische Motivik in der frühgriechischen Literatur am Beispeil der homerischen Epen...," 187-90

[51] *CAD* K 436, s.v. *kiṣru*.

[52] *CAD* E 416, s.v. *ezēbu*.

[53] Scott B. Noegel, "A Janus Parallelism in the Gilgamesh Flood Story," *ASJ* 13 (1991), 419-21; "An Asymmetrical Janus Parallelism in the Gilgamesh Flood Story," *ASJ* 16 (1994), 10-12.

noted that the former plays on the polysemy inherent in the word *ubla*, namely "want, desire, yearn for"[54] and also "carry and sweep off (which often is said of water),"[55] and that the latter in XI:26 involves two puns: *zerma* "spurn," which also can be read as *sêrma* "construct"; and *makkura* "property," which also suggests *makura* "boat" (from Sum. má-gur$_8$).[56] I shall not detail my observations here since they are available elsewhere. Suffice it to add that in both passage Ea also equips his urgent message with a wealth of alliteration, specifically in the repeated consonants /b/, /l/, and /n/.

Later in XI:45-47,[57] Ea issues a polysemous warning to Utnapishtim by telling him that the chief god Enlil promises to "provide" (*zanānu*) the people with an "abundance" (*nuḫšu*) of "wheat cakes" (*kukki*) and "wheat" (*kibati*). Utnapishtim, the wise man that he is, is able to perceive other meanings in these four words, namely an "excessive" (*nuḫšu*) "storm" (*zanānu*) of "darkness" (*kukkû*) and "heaviness" (*kibittu*).[58]

Each of the polysemous statements I have discussed have in common a context of dreams. As Ea tells the divine assembly: *anāku ul apta pirišti ilāni rabûti. Atra-ḫasis šunata ušabrišumma pirišti ilāni išme* "It was not I who disclosed the secret of the great gods. I let Atra-ḫasis behold a dream, and he perceived the secret of the gods" (XI:186-187).

Examples of the literary portrayal of symbolic dreams and the punning heremeneutic could be multiplied many times,[59] and I could add to them samples from the biblical record; but I think the point has been made-since the ancient Near Eastern literary texts were the perview of mantics, they accurately reflect the use of the punning hermeneutic also found in other forms of Near Eastern divination.

The materials I have discussed, and the parallels between Mesopotamian and Greek dream omens, naturally raise the question whether earlier Greek literary texts reflect the punning hermeneutic. With this in mind, I turn to what W. Arend has defined as the only extant symbolic dream in early Greek literature,[60] that of Penelope's dream in the *Odyssey* 19:536-559:

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[54] *CAD* A/1 21-22, s.v. *abālu*. See also the double sense of *abālu* in an apodosis in the Venus Tablets of Ammiṣaduqa (= Tablet 63 of the series Enuma Anu Enlil): *nagbu ippataru* ^{d}*Adad zunnešu* ^{d}*Ea nagbešu ubbula šarru ana šarri šalima isappar* "'springs to open?,' Adad will bring his rains, Ea his floods, king will send messages of reconciliation to king." Found in Reiner and Pingree, *Enuma Anu Enlil, Tablet 63: The Venus Tablet of Ammiṣaduqa*, 13.

[55] *CAD* A/1 16-17, s.v. *abālu*.

[56] Harry A. Hoffner, "Enki's Command to Atrahasis," in *Kramer Anniversary Volume*. B. L. Eichler, al. (eds.), *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* (Num. 25; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976), 244.

[57] Scott B. Noegel, "Raining Terror: Another Wordplay Cluster in Gilgamesh Tablet XI (Assyrian Version, ll. 45-47)," *NABU* 75 (1997), 39-40.

[58] *CAD* K 498, s.v. *kukki*. The first to spot the wordplay was Carl Frank, "Zu den Wortspeilen *kukku* und *kibāti* in Gilg. EXI," *ZA* 36 (1925), 216. For a contrary opinion see A. R. Millard, "The Sign of the Flood," *Iraq* 49 (1987), 63-9. Here, I think, Millard does not realize that puns need not be grammatically "perfect" to be effective. See also my remarks in "Raining Terror: Another Wordplay Cluster in Gilgamesh Tablet XI (Assyrian Version, ll. 45-47)," *NABU* 75 (1997), 39-40, regarding M. Malul's ("A Possible Janus Parallelism in the Epic of Gilgamesh XI, 130," *ASJ* 17 [1995], 338-42). Moreover, the text Millard chooses as a preferable example was discussed already in my dissertation, which has since been published as *Janus Parallelism in the Book of Job* (*JSOTSup*, 223; Sheffield, 1996), see especially 160-2. Moreover, in the light of the polysemes discussed above, we do well to note the remark by Ulla Jeyes, *Old Babylonian Extispicy: Omen Texts in the British Museum* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut Te Istanbul, 1989), 44, regarding a liver omen based on the darkness and abundant fat of a particular visceral feature: "The combination of fat = abundance = negativity fittingly produces an apodosis which predicts a flood."

[59] See Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*.

[60] W. Arend, *Die typische Szenen bei Homer* (Berlin,

> Listen to this dream of mine and interpret it. I keep a flock of twenty geese (χῆνές μοι) here. They eat grain from the water (πυρὸν ἐδουσιν εξ ὕδατος) and I delight in watching them. In my dream I saw a great eagle with a curved beak (ἀγκυλοχείλης) swoop down from the mountain (ὄρεος) and break their necks (αὐχένας), killing them (ἔκτανεν). There they lay heaped (ἐκέχυντο) in the great hall (μεγάροις), while he soared up into the clear sky... I grieved piteously because the eagle had killed my geese (μοι αἰετὸς ἔκτανε χῆνας).[61]

The inclusion of birds in Penelope's dream offers a narrative twist found also in Near Eastern literature;[62] namely the placement of an omen within an omen,[63] since birds too were divinatory tools.[64] Moreover, since the name Penelope itself suggests the word "duck," the attentive reader cannot help but attribute importance to birds and their meaning in this pericope.

More important is the presence in Penelope's dream of word plays that constitute riddles to the dream's interpretation. The first is Penelope's reference to geese coming from the water to eat grain. Here the expression ἐδουσιν εξ ὕδατος "they eat grain from the water" perhaps suggests the name Ὀδυσσεύς.[65] The pun is piqued by ambiguous syntax which forces us to contemplate whether the πυρὸν or the geese are in the water.[66]

Also suggestive of Odysseus is the eagel's curved beak, his ἀγκυλοχείλης, which punfully echoes Odysseus' "curved bow" (ἀγκύλα τόξα) (cf. *Odyssey* 21:264). The pun is edified soon afterwards by Penelope's decision to test the Suitors with Odysseus' bow.

Word plays also connect the word χῆνές "geese," with ἐκέχυντο "heap up," and ἔκτανεν used for the "killing" of the geese. These puns are reinforced by the semantic parameters of the verb κτείνω, which Liddell and Scott note only rarely appear in reference to animals. In fact, they cite Penelope's dream as an exception.[67] Thus, the puns and the verb for "kill" suggest the slaughter of humans. Moreover, the number and appetites of the geese also suggest their interpretation as the Suitors, for the Suitors frequently appear as twenty feasting men.[68]

Penelope's use of the word αὐχένας

1933), 61, n. 3, notes that Penelope's dream does not conform structurally to other Homeric dreams which are message dreams. A. H. M. Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature* (The Netherlands, 1978), 150, asserts that all dreams in Homer are message dreams. See also the comment of Joseph Russo, Manuel Fernández-Galiano, and Alfred Heubeck, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2 (Oxford, 1992), 102, that "of several dreams in Homer, only this one resembles a true dream: its message is hidden in a symbolic code."

[61] The translation (with minor modification) is that of E. V. Rieu, *Homer: The Odyssey* (New York, 1991).

[62] Gudea's dream in Cylinder A:17. E. Jan Wilson, *The Cylinders of Gudea: Transliteration, Translation, and Index* (AOAT, 224; Neukirchener Verlag Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1996), 26-7; and the dreams of Joseph in Gen 40:17-19. Ancient Near Eastern literature knows of other instances in which omens are placed within other omens, e.g., a Kassite extispicy text which is said to have occurred in a dream. See H. F. Lutz, "A Cassite Liver Omen Text," *JAOS* 38 (1918), 77-96.

[63] Ludwig Binswanger, *Wandlungen in der Auffassung und Deutung des Traumes: von den Griechen bis zur Gegenwart* (Berlin, 1928); Joachim Hundt, *Der Traumglaube bei Homer* (Grieswalder Beiträge zur Literatur und Stilforchung, 9; Grieswald, 1935), 2-3.

[64] Noted also by Hundt, *Der Traumglaube bei Homer*, 90, n. 28.

[65] For other puns on Odysseus' name see Louis Philippe Rank, *Etymologiseering en Verwante Verschijnselen bij Homerus* (Netherlands, 1951), 51-62; B. Louden, "Categories of Homeric Wordplay," *TAPA* 125 (1995), 34-7.

[66] Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, 101-2.

[67] L&S, 1001, s.v. κτείνω.

[68] We also later learn that twenty maidens were required for the Suitors, presumably one for each Suitor, *Odyssey* 20:157; cf. Telemachus' reference to the "more than twenty" Suitors in 16:245. Note the remark of Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, 102, that "...the single activity that characterizes the geese is *eating*..." (italics original).

for "necks" continues the punning on χῆνές and ἐκέχυντο and reinforces the interpretive connection between the broken necks of the assembly and her Suitors who just previously are called the best of the Achaeans (Ἀχαιῶν) (*Odyssey* 19:529).[69]

The heaping of dead geese in the "great halls" (μεγάροις) also suggests the slaying of the Suitors for the great halls are where the Suitors continually banquet (17:604). In fact, we later learn that Odysseus' slaughter of the Suitors leaves them heaped (κέχυντο) in the "great halls" (μεγάρων) (*Odyssey* 22:375, 389).[70] In addition, the use of ἐκέχυντο recalls a previous scene in which maidens feed the Suitors with bread (like the geese) and pour water (ἔχευαν ὕδωρ) over their hands (1:146).

Note also in the expression μοι αἰετὸς ἔκτανε χῆνας how Penelope's use of μοι can be understood as a simple possessive with χῆνας, but also as a dative of disadvantage with ἔκτανε meaning "he killed them for me." Moreover, the reading μοι αἰτὸς as "my eagle" offers an ironic subtlety that suggests to Russo that "Penelope does not yet know that the eagle is more truly hers than the geese are."[71]

The cumulative impact of these puns justifies the words of the eagle in Penelope's dream who perches on a beam and interprets:

> "The geese are the Suitors, and I, that before was the eagle-omen (αἰετὸς ὄρνις), am now again (αὖτε τεὸς) come back as your husband (πόσις), who will let loose a cruel doom upon all the Suitors" (*Odyssey* 546-549).

Note how the eagle draws a punning connection between his form as an eagle (αἰετὸς) and what he is now again (αὖτε τεὸς), i.e., her husband. The word πόσις "husband," also is polysemous and can mean "a drinking feast" or "carousal"[72] (cf. *Odyssey* 10:176, *Iliad* 1:469). Its usage here befits the image of drinking geese in the dream and hints at Odysseus' return while the Suitor's carouse.

After listening to the dream, the disguised Odysseus perceives Penelope's account as an omen[73] and assures her of the interpretation's accuracy.

> Lady, in no wise is it possible to interpret (ὑποκρίνασθαι)[74] this dream and give it another meaning... For the Suitors' destruction is plain to see, for one and all; not one of them shall escape death and doom (κῆρας) (*Odyssey* 19:555-558).

Penelope replies (in a famous passage later imitated by Vergil in the *Aeneid*).

> "Dreams, my friend," said the thoughtful Penelope, "are awkward and confusing things: not all that people see in them comes true. For there are two gates through which these unsubstantial visions reach us; one is of horn (κεράεσσι)[75] and

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[69] The pun also reminds us of the eagels' actions that the augur interpreted in book 2. There, however, the word for necks was δειρὰς. The use of αὐχένας, therefore, stands out intertextually.

[70] Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, 102, note that "Homer has sustained a (perhaps unconscious) connection with the suitors in his choice of the verb."

[71] The observations on the possessive use of μοι are found in Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, p 102.

[72] L&S, 1453, s.v. πόσις.

[73] As noted by Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature*, 99.

[74] This verb is commonly used for interpreting omens and oracles. See *Iliad* 5:150.

[75] E. L. Highbarger, *The Gates of Dreams* (Baltimore, 1940), 38, indentified the gate of horns as the Gate of the Sun known in Mesopotamian and Egyptian mythology sources, a gate guarded by a bull, but the Gate of Ivory has not permitted a similar identification. This interpetation has not received general acceptance, though Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, 103, notes "The prominence given in Crete to sacred horns could well derive from this eastern source."

> the other of ivory (ἐλέφαντι). Those that come through the carved ivory (ἐλέφαντος) gate deceive/harm us (ἐλεφαίρονται) bringing unfulfillment (ἀκράαντα φέροντες); whereas those that issue from the gate of burnished horn (κεράων) really fulfill (ἔτυμα κραίνουσι)..."[76] (19:560-565, 571-572).

Penelope's pessimism plays on Odysseus' use of ὑποκρίνασθαι and κῆρας. Her remark also equates horn with fulfillment and ivory with deception, i.e., κεράων with κραίνουσι and ἐλέφαντος with ἐλεφαίρονται. Moreover, Penelope's statement is ambiguous because "each verbal phrase describing what each group of dreams does is open to two interpretations."[77] The verb ἐλεφαίρονται means both "cheat" and "damage," and the expression ἔτυμα κραίνουσι can mean "fulfill things that are real" or "really have power to fulfill."[78] For Penelope the allusive nature of symbolic dreams is readily conveyed through the ambiguity of word play.[79]

Such punning in the story of Penelope's symbolic dream, like the dream accounts in the epic of Gilgamesh, demonstrate the *Odyssey*'s familiarity with the interpretive strategies of mantics.

Moreover, Penelope's dream edifies for the audience a previous omen in book 2 in which Zeus vindicates Telémachus' assertion that Odysseus would return by sending two eagles who fly from on high from a mountain peak.

> For a time they flew swift as the blasts of the wind side by side with wings outspread; but when they reached the middle of the many-voiced assembly, then they wheeled about, flapping their wings rapidly, and down on the heads of all they looked, and death was in their glare. Then they tore with their talons one another's cheeks and necks (δειρὰς) on either side, and darted away to the right across the houses and the city of the men (*Odyssey* 2:146-154).

Amazed at the omen, Telémachus and his companions consult one Halithérses whom Homer describes as surpassing "all men of his day in knowledge of birds and in uttering words of fate" (*Odyssey* 2:157). He interprets the omen as predicting a great woe upon Penelope's wooers, and the return of Odysseus in the twentieth year.[80] According to Joseph Russo, the actions of the birds constitute a foreshadowing by producing "a vivid picture, corresponding closely to the tactics of Odysseus' vengeance, an unexpected attack by a determined pair on an unarmed crowd."[81] Yet, the omen is more than a literary device, it is a reflection of the poet's conception of omens, his mantic ideology; for the text derives from a cultural matrix that treated omens as divine messages. Literary allusions are

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[76] Kessels, *Studies on the Dream in Greek Literature*, 128, n. 73, notes that the Homeric Hymn *hymnus ad Mercurium*, 559 and Euripides, *Ion*, 604 use the verb κραίνω "fulfill" in connection with divination.

[77] Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, 103.

[78] Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 2, 103.

[79] Anne Amory, "The Gates of Horn and Ivory," *Yale Classical Studies* 30 (1966), 43-9, has observed, Penelope's mention of "horn" (κέρας) subtly reminds us of Odysseus by way of his bow, which is made of horn (21:393-5) and Odysseus' eyes which the narrator remarks repressed tears as if fixed by iron and horn (19:211-12). Moreover, Penelope's reference to ivory anticipates her opening of the storeroom with an ivory-handled key to get Odysseus' bow of horn. Amory concludes: "The bow and the key are connected primarily with the revenge theme... but the gates of the dreams passage is connected also with the revenge theme..." (49).

[80] It is worth noting here that Eustathius' 12th century commentary sees the actions of the eagles in the omen in *Odyssey* 2:154 as clawing the necks and cheeks of the Ithacans. This would provide an even closer parallel between the dream and the omen.

[81] Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 1, p 141.

thus essentially a means by which the poet portrays the art of prediction. Indeed, Homer vindicates the augur when after the twentieth year Odysseus returns.

The verification of one omen with another is standard Near Eastern practice and is widely reflected in Near Eastern texts. Since dreams and omens were inherently uncertain, their interpretations required the support of other divinatory efforts. While the "combination of dream and omen or a dream and oracle is found nowhere in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*,"[82] the depiction of divinatory activity in the *Odyssey* illustrates this same narrative program of omen verification through dreams and other portents.[83]

We already have seen how Penelope's dream affirms the augur's prediction in book 2, but prior to Penelope's dream Telémachus observes a similar omen:

> Even as he spoke a bird flew by on the right, an eagle (αἰετὸς), bearing in his talons a great, white goose (χῆνα), a tame fowl from the yard, and men and women followed shouting. But the eagle drew near to them, and darted off to the right in front of the horses; and they were glad as they saw it, and the hearts in the breasts of all were cheered (15:160-165).

Before Telémachus can interpret the omen Helen prophesies:[84]

> Even as this [eagle] came from the mountain, where are his kin, and where he was born, and snatched up the goose (χῆν) that was bred in the house, even so shall Odysseus return to his home after many toils and many wanderings, and shall take vengeance; or even now he is at home, and is sowing the seeds of evil for all the Suitors (15:174-178).

Soon afterwards Zeus sends Telémachus another sign of the Suitor's demise.

> Even as he spoke a bird flew by upon the right, a hawk, the swift messenger of Apollo. In his talons he held a dove, and was plucking her and shedding the feathers down on the ground...(15:525-534).

The seer Theoclúmenos[85] interprets the omen as meaning "no other descent than yours in Ithaca is more kingly (βασιλεύτερον); you are supreme forever" (15:533-534). This omen shown to Telémachus' serves an allusive function in the narrative, anticipating Odysseus' killing of the Suitors on the day sacred to Apollo (20:276-278,21:258-259).

Numerous lexical and thematic features parallel Penelope's dream with the augur and Theoclúmenos' predictions in books 2 and 15. Both the augur's prediction and Penelope's dream report eagles that soar from mountains and break the necks of assembly members, killing them. Both omens incorporate the number twenty. Like Penelope's dream, the omen in book 15 interprets an eagle that soars from a mountain and kills a goose (χῆν). All omens suggest the same interpretation which comes to pass. Again, this is more than sophisticated intratextuality, it is a poetic method for demonstrating the veracity of the omens.

Just as Penelope's dream edified three previous bird omens, so too does the *Odyssey* edify the interpretation of Penelope's

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[82] Messer, *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy*, 67. However, Messer did not consider Zeus' double confirmation of Odysseus' dream-vision through a verbal utterance and portent in 20:100-1.

[83] Note also the observation of Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 222-3 who recognized in *Iliad* 5:149-51 the implication "that the *oneiropolos* likewise sought to establish the meaning of 'symbolic' dreams by means of provoked omens."

[84] In Hittite bird omens one also finds female interpreters. See, e.g., Annelies Kammenhuber, *Orakelpraxis, Träume, und Vorzeichenschau bei den Hethitern* (Heidelberg, 1976), 46.

[85] *Odyssey* 15:225-56 establishes the seer as a descendant of a family of reputable diviners.

dream in book 20:98-119 by way of a *kledon* (20:120), i.e., an omen based on an accidental overhearing, another omen type found earlier in Mesopotamia.[86] In book 20 Odysseus prays to Zeus for a sign, and Zeus responds with a peal of thunder from a cloudless sky, to which a woman grinding wheat stops and remarks:

> Surely this is a portent (τέρας) that you are showing to some man ... May the Suitors this day for the last and latest time hold their glad feast in the halls (μεγάροις) of Odysseus. They have weakened my limbs with bitter labor, as I made them barley meal, may they now sup their last (20:114-119).

In anticipation of the fated feast, twenty maidens draw water for the Suitors.

The portent is another link in the *Odyssey*'s chain of omens that predict Odysseus' return. To this end the text again employs lexical and thematic features that remind his audience of Penelope's dream. Both episodes involve πυρὸν "wheat," references to the halls of Odysseus, the gluttony of the Suitors, their drinking of water, and the number twenty (*Odyssey* 20:157). Both omens predict the return of Odysseus.

Moreover, this *kledon* anticipates yet another bird omen witnessed by the Suitors who ask of Zeus a sign while plotting the death of Telémachus in the assembly: "...a bird on their left, an eagle of lofty flight, clutching a timid dove" (20:242-247). As Russo intuitively notes, "This powerful eagle and helpless dove recall the bird symbolism of Penelope's dream, and point to the destruction of the Suitors by the powerful Odysseus."[87]

The punning connections between Penelope's symbolic dream and its meaning, and the word plays in Penelope's statement about dream interpretation demonstrate the *Odyssey*'s familiarity with the linguistic techniques of mantics; techniques that are grounded in Mesopotamian. The integration of divinatory knowledge into a literary artifice that verifies one omen by way of another also is standard Near Eastern practice. In a similar vein Gerd Stein has shown that the praxis described in the *Odyssey*'s "Book of the Dead," (book 11) by which Odysseus consults a prophet shares much in common with Hittite and Mesopotamian magic rituals.[88] R. Rollinger also has demonstrated a number of similarities between Homeric and Mesopotamian mantics.[89] It would appear, therefore, that the redactors of the *Odyssey* were associated with mantics closely enough also to portray their oneirocritic activity accurately and with legitimacy.[90]

A comprehensive discussion of the numerous similarities between Penelope's dream in the *Odyssey* and the other dreams mentioned in the epic of Gilgamesh is beyond the scope and space limitations of this article. Suffice it to add, however, that when combined with the evidence for a shared narrative strat-

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[86] Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 211, compares this episode with that of Gideon in Judges 7.

[87] Russo, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol. 3, 120.

[88] See, e.g., G. Steiner, "Die Unterweltsbeschwörung des Odysseus im Lichte Hethitischer Texte," *UF* 3 (1971), 265-83.

[89] Rollinger, "Altorientalische Motivik in der frühgriechischen Literatur am Beispeil der homerischen Epen..."

[90] Homer as blind poet also fits the topos of mantics as handicapped in ancient Mediterranean world. Cf. Teiresias the blind seer (*Odyssey* 10:493), and the blind Demodokos (*Odyssey* 8:36) who though deprived of sight was given sweet song. On this see John Pairman Brown, "The Mediterranean Seer and Shamanism," *ZAW* 93 (1981), 374-400, especially 377-8.

egy of omen verification and oneiromantic punning, some degree of Near Eastern influence seems likely.

Of course, the influence need not have been direct. A. Leo Oppenheim suggested that Near Eastern influence on Greek divinatory practices derived from Telemessos in Caria, a city famed for the invention of all sorts of divinatory techniques.[91] Whether this region of Southwest Asia Minor acted as a conduit for the diffusion of Near Eastern oneirocritic methods, from Mesopotamian and Hittite centers of learning to Greece, is impossible to demonstrate. Nevertheless, in the light of growing evidence for Near Eastern influence in Homeric texts, it seems a plausible scenario.[92] Such a view recalls W. Burkert and Fritz Graf's[93] attribution of influence to the itinerant seers, both reminiscent of Cyrus Gordon's earlier suggestion that the *demioergoi* spread Near Eastern mantic culture throughout the Homeric West.[94]

Regardless of the model of transmission, a comparison of Near Eastern mantic techniques with the *Odyssey*'s portrayal of the same, suggests that they were cut from similar cloth. At the very least, the comparisons help to elucidate each other. As scholars continue to investigate Near Eastern and Aegean contacts, it will become increasingly more important to establish with greater clarity the social contexts of mantics in these regions, and to reflect synchronically and diachronically upon the relationship between magic (however defined), divination, wisdom, and literature.

Some work in this area already has been done, especially by Classicists, and with exciting results. Sarah Iles Johnston, for example, recently has undertaken a comparative study of the Greek and Near Eastern use of figurines to represent and control ghosts.[95] Her study sees the borrowing and adaptation of Near Eastern concepts as a process that "validated or challenged existing Greek cultural values."[96]

Viewing the process of adaptation in this way allows us to appreciate better how this borrowing is negotiated as a cultural process. With reference to dream interpretation and the Near Eastern punning hermeneutic, such an approach allows us to place the evidence for shared mantic practices in a social context and to see in the similarities and distinctions signs of validation and challenge.

Adopting Johnston's approach we might say that in the light of the Near Eastern materials, the *Odyssey*'s treatment of symbolic dreams differs little, suggesting that the theoretical principles that undergird Mesopotamian oneiromancy, and other forms of divination, offer little challenge to the existing cultural values of his day.

Where the Homeric text does appear to

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[91] Cf. Cicero, *De divinatione* 1:41.

[92] Observed by Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, 239.

[93] Fritz Graf, "Excluding the Charming: The Development of the Greek Concept of Magic," in Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 129; Leiden, 1995), 29-42.

[94] Cyrus H. Gordon, "Ugaritic Guilds and Homeric ΔΗΜΙΟΕΡΓΟΙ," in Saul Weinberg (ed.), *The Aegean and the Near East: Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman on the Occasion of Her Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Locust Valley, NY, 1956), 136-43.

[95] Sarah Isles Johnston, "Songs for the Ghosts: Magical Solutions to Deadly Problems," in David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norweigian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997* (Papers of the Norwegian Institute of Athens, 4; Bergen, 1999), 83-102.

[96] Johnston, "Songs for the Ghosts: Magical Solutions to Deadly Problems," 89.

differ is in its use of word play beyond the narrative confines of the symbolic dream and its interpretation. Penelope's speech *about* dreams incorporates word plays, which, while indexing the techniques of oneiromantics, and thus reminding us of the hermeneutical key to understanding her dream, also registers what might be thought of as an expanded literary use of the device.

Moreover, where the *Odyssey* also appears to differ is in its marked ambivalence concerning the reliability of decoding symbolic dreams with accuracy; hence, Penelope's gates of horn and ivory. Agamemnon's deceitful message dream (οὖλος ὄνειρος) in the *Iliad* 2:6 could be mentioned in support. Such an ambivalent, if not mistrusting understanding of dreams accords less with the Near Eastern materials, and reflects a certain amount of tension in antiquity with regard to the reliability of dreams, especially symbolic ones, as a mode of divine discourse. However, since the *Odyssey* anticipates Penelope's symbolic dream through mantic acts of augury and kledomancy, and since it validates both them and the dream by allowing Odysseus to return in the twentieth year, we must see its treatment of the symbolic dream as a literary response to this tension, and as a legitimation of the oneirocritic arts over and against any contrary views of the day.

Perhaps of greater significance, then, than the source of the *Odyssey*'s divinatory knowledge, is the implication that an awareness of divinatory technique holds for ancient conceptions of the poet.[97]

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[97] See, e.g., Brown, "The Mediterranean Seer and Shamanism."