

**THE DREAM IN
HOMER AND GREEK
TRAGEDY**

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The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy by William Stuart Messer

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WILLIAM STUART MESSER

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Columbia University
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IN
HOMER AND GREEK TRAGEDY

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THE DREAM
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CLARENCE H. YOUNG,
Chairman.

PREFACE

This treatise is part of a broader investigation of the dream in all its aspects, literary and non-literary, to which I have devoted the spare hours of the last seven years. My primary interest in this investigation has been in the dream and its ways in Latin literature. A study published in *Mnemosyne*, 45, 78-92, in which I suggested a possible source for one feature of a certain type of Roman dream, may be taken as defining to some extent my interest in the dream from the literary standpoint as well as presenting my conclusions with respect to the problems involved in the particular dream considered in that study. But to treat adequately the dream in Latin literature presupposes a knowledge of its ancestor and prototype in Greek literature, and so the present introductory monograph embodies one phase of my researches in the earlier field. It discusses some aspects of the dream in a portion of that field—*Homer*, *Hesiod* and *Greek Tragedy*. It concerns itself with the dream as an originating cause or directing principle of the action in poem or play, a moving force in the evolution of narrative or plot and in the introduction of smaller incidents and episodes. An American scholar¹ has recently complained of the lack of a proper study of the matter of motivation in Greek and Latin tragedy and comedy. This essay touches upon a limited portion of that larger investigation. From another point of view it deals, within the limits of each dream picture, with the amplification of the dream, its increasing complexity, its growth and refinement, or its decay, as an artistic literary device. I hope at no far distant date to publish further studies in other aspects of the dream.

¹H. W. Prescott, *Classical Philology*, 11, 136; 141.