

# *Aeneid VI* and Medieval Views of Dreaming

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Virgil's *Aeneid* was the most popular classical text preserved by the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. Like many classical works, it abounds in dreams and so it is not surprising that it should have influenced medieval thought concerning them. Perhaps even more importantly, the *Aeneid* was seen by medieval scholars as resembling a dream, in that it was a falsehood that concealed a truth, and in this respect it was representative of all pagan and indeed fictional literature. Virgil's contribution to medieval dream theory derives preeminently from *Aeneid VI*, which both provides a model of an otherworld journey and makes metaphoric statements about the nature of dreams. Virgilian imagery figures in Gregory the Great's account of Stephen's vision, in the popular *Visio San Pauli*, in Gregory of Tours account of Sunniulf's vision, in the visions of Prudentius and Wetti, in the twelfth-century visions of Tundale and *St. Patrick's Purgatory*, and, of course, in Dante's *Divine Comedy* where Virgil guides Dante through Hell<sup>2</sup>. Aeneas' descent to the otherworld through a cave with an ecstatic priestess as guide suggests incubation such as

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1 B.Munk Olsen "La popularité des textes classiques entre le IX<sup>e</sup> et le XII<sup>e</sup> siècle" *Revue d'Histoire des Textes* XIV-XV (1984-85) 169-181. On the medieval treatment of Virgil see D.Comparetti *Virgil in the Middle Ages* (trans) E.F.M.Benecke (Allen & Unwin, London, 1895, 1966); H.de Lubac *Exégèse Médiévale: Les Quatres Sens de l'Écriture* Vol.II (Montaigne, Paris, 1964); and more recently J.D.Bernard (ed) *Virgil at 2000* (New York, 1984) and *Lectures Médiévales de Virgile* (Collection de l'Ecole de Rome 80, Rome, 1985).

2 P.Courcelle "Les Pères de l'Eglise devant les Enfers Virgiliens" *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age* 22 (1955) 5-74, especially pp.30-31; J.Le Goff *La Naissance du Purgatoire* (Gallimard, Paris, 1981) pp.39-42; and on Dante, H.T.Silverstein "Dante and Vergil the Mystic" *Harvard Studies in Philology and Literature* XIV (1932) 51-82.

medieval Christians practised at St.Patrick's Purgatory. Virgil's account was inspired by Plato's vision of Er, itself a literary version of a shamanistic soul journey<sup>3</sup>. *Aeneid VI* begins with Daedalus, whose flight Neoplatonic commentators saw as symbolic of that of the soul, and ends with Aeneas and the Sybil emerging, curiously enough, from the Gate of False Dreams. Between these two points Virgil not only makes several references to dreams but also presents a Platonic myth of the eternal cycle of the soul's incorporation, purification and release. The nature of this allegory, and the meaning of the Gate of Ivory and the *falsa insomnia* which pass through it, excited the interest of medieval commentators as they continue to puzzle moderns.

After sacrificing to female chthonic deities, Aeneas descends into the dark and before the house of Death meets Sleep, Death's brother, along with the other ills of the physical state. Here in the vestibule of Orcus is found the Elm tree whose leaves shelter *somnia vana*, that is empty dreams. It is surrounded by fabulous monsters. As living people, Aeneas and the Sybil are at first denied entrance to the Land of the Dead by Charon, who declares:

umbrarum hic locus est, somni noctisque soporae<sup>4</sup>

[This is the land of shadows, of Sleep and drowsy night<sup>5</sup>]

Passing from the dark female netherworld to the light male Elysium, Aeneas finds himself unable to embrace his father.

ter frustra compressa manus effugit imago,  
par levibus ventis volucrique simillima somno<sup>6</sup>

[Three times the Shade escaped from that vain clasp -  
like light winds, or most like swift dreams<sup>7</sup>.]

Finally Aeneas and the Sybil return to earth, not via the Horn Gate reserved

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3 E.R.Dodds *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Uni. of California P., Berkeley, 1951) p.210; more immediate models for dream revelations combining philosophy and politics were Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Ennius' *Annales*, see P.R.Hardie *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1986) pp.74-81. A description of the otherworld by a dead soul also occurs in Virgil's *Culex*. Although probably a parody, it did not escape medieval allegorisation, see for example Alexander Neckam *De Naturis Rerum* (ed) T. Wright (Rolls Series, London, 1863) pp.190-191.

<sup>4</sup>...l.390, *Aeneid VI*.

<sup>5</sup> ll.514-515, *The Aeneid of Virgil* (trans) A.Mandelbaum (Uni. of California P., Berkeley, 1971) p.151.

<sup>6</sup>...ll.701-702, *Aeneid VI*.

<sup>7</sup> ll.926-927, (trans) Mandelbaum 1971 p161.

for true shades, *verae umbrae*, but through the Ivory Gate by which the dead send *falsa insomnia*.

Virgil took the Gates of Dreams from Homer's *Odyssey* where there is a pun on horn/fulfill and ivory/deceive.

There are two gates of insubstantial dreams.  
One pair is fashioned of horn, the other of ivory.  
Of dreams those that pass through carven ivory  
Deceive, bearing words with no fulfilment;  
But those that pass to the outside world through polished horn  
Fulfil true things, when any mortal sees them.<sup>8</sup>

In his influential commentary on the *Aeneid*, the fourth-century A.D. grammarian Servius associated the *somnia vana* of the Elm with the *falsa insomnia* of the Ivory Gate, leading him to place the latter in the vestibule of Orcus, and thence to conclude that the episode is fabulous since both entrance and exit are through the false gate<sup>9</sup>. Referring to the Elm he observes that

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<sup>8</sup> *Odyssey* 19.562-67; the translation is taken from Boyle 1986 p.143; see also S.M.Oberhelman *The Oneirocritic Literature of the Late Roman and Byzantine Eras of Greece* (Ph.D., Minnesota Uni., 1981, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor) pp.3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Most modern commentators have been unwilling to accept either Servius' identification of *falsa insomnia* with *somnia vana*, or his explanation for the exit through the Ivory Gate. B.Otis "Three Problems of Aeneid 6" *Transactions of the American Philological Association* XC (1959) 165-179 and R.G.Austin (ed) *Aeneidos Liber Sextus* (Clarendon, Oxford, 1977) p.276 find the suggestion of a circular route topographically absurd. It remains the most philosophically satisfying and is developed at length by E.L.Highbarger *The Gates of Dreams* (John Hopkins, Baltimore, 1940) who is followed by H.R.Steiner *Der Traum in der Aeneis* (Haupt, Stuttgart, 1952) pp.90-91. T.J.Haarhoff "The Gates of Sleep" *Greece and Rome* 17 (1948) 88-90 takes the Platonic allegory even further, insisting on the paradox that what is false to the material world is true to the spiritual. Fr.Dübner *Oeuvres de Virgile* (Lecoffre, Paris, 1872), S.J.van Ooteghem "Somni Portae" *Les Etudes Classiques* 16 (1948) 386-390, L.-F.Rolland "La porte d'ivoire" *Revue des Etudes Latines* 35 (1957) 204-223 and Austin 1977 maintain that Aeneas and the Sybil leave through the Ivory Gate because, not being *verae umbrae*, they cannot leave through the Horn Gate. While plausible, this seems to underrate the philosophical significance of the poem. Otis 1959 follows Servius in holding that the Ivory Gate exit means it is a dream, and so requires to be interpreted. A.J.Boyle *The Chaonian Dove* (Leiden, Brill, 1986) pp.142-145 follows Servius in believing Virgil meant the incident was false, but does not agree it requires interpretation. Boyle argues instead that Virgil meant Anchises' promises of imperial greatness were cruel lies leading only to death and despair. But are we to understand that the misery of the dead Dido and the slaughtered Greeks is equally illusory? While attractive to modern sensibilities, Boyle's interpretation falls short of explaining the underworld descent as a whole. W.Everett "Upon Virgil, Aeneid VI., Vss 893-898" *Classical Review* 14 (1900) 153-154 thought the Ivory Gate exit meant they left before midnight, but this seems excessively trivial and the convention is not universally followed in the *Aeneid*, let alone in Latin literature generally.

Highbarger 1940 shows that the shining Ivory Gate derives from the cloud-covered Eastern home of the Gods, while the Gate of Horns (in the plural) is the entrance to the Western abode of the dead. He suggests that the deceitful nature of the Ivory Gate dreams is a function of the notorious unreliability of the Greek gods and of the enigmatic nature of their communications. The dead, on the other hand, were believed by the Greeks, and even more strongly by the Romans, to tell the truth. The dream and the dream

writers on dreams state they are meaningless when the leaves are falling. He further interprets this as meaning that dreams are vain when arising from below though true when sent from above<sup>10</sup>. The belief in the falsity of autumn dreams derives from Democritus' theory that dreams were spectral images, or *eidola*, entering the body through the skin. In autumn the images were distorted due to the turbulence of the air<sup>11</sup>. Through a recuperative reversal, this essentially materialist theory gave rise to the belief in the truth of spring dreams which features as a major *topos* of the medieval dream vision poem. Servius' use of the theory to affirm the truth of (some) dreams while conceding the falsity of (some) dreams is a typical example of the fate of materialist theories in the hands of Neoplatonic commentators. Turning to the twin gates, Servius implies that they denote the two levels at which poetry must be understood, the false words indicating a deeper truth. He further glosses the Gates of Horn and Ivory as referring to the eyes and teeth respectively. Through our eyes we perceive truth with certainty but through our mouth we may utter falsehood. So Aeneas leaves by the Ivory Gate. The plainness of horn and the decorativeness of ivory further indicate that the truth of dreams is to be judged by their verisimilitude. Those dreams which accord with fortune and so should be considered worthy of confidence are symbolised by the plainness of horn, while the more extravagant fantasies represented by the ornateness of ivory should be ignored<sup>12</sup>. Servius' interpretation of the Gates is repeated in abbreviated form by the First Vatican Mythographer<sup>13</sup>.

At the beginning of the fifth century Macrobius used Virgil for his commentary on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*. Equating *insomnia* with the Greek *enypnion*, Macrobius explained that it referred to dreams that have no significance beyond their actual occurrence; in other words they were important only during sleep. He quoted Virgil's references to show that such dreams are deceptive and are caused by physical and mental desires such as

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figure being identified, the dead were themselves true dreams, *verae umbrae*, for dreams, ghosts, shadows and souls were alike in their insubstantiality, as Virgil suggests in his description of Aeneas' vain attempt to embrace his dead father. Platonism provided a rationale for this belief - freed from the body the soul had no reason to lie. Like Servius, Highbarger suggests entry as well as exit through the Ivory Gate in accordance with the cycle of reincarnation.

10 Servius *Comm. in Verg. Aen.* VI 282-284, (ed) G.Thilo in G.Thilo & H.Hagen (eds) *Servii Grammatici* Vol.II (Olms, Hildesheim, 1961) pp.49-50.

11 R.G.A. Van Lieshout *Greeks on Dreams* (Hes, Utrecht, 1980) p.88.

12 Servius 893-896, pp.122-123.

13 Mythographer I 228 in G.Bode (ed) *Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum Latini Tres Romae Nuper Reperti* Vol.I (Celle, 1834) p.70.

love<sup>14</sup>. Discussing the Gates, he cites Porphyry on their appearance in Homer. The veil of bodily entanglement may be compared to the opacity of ivory or the transparency of horn in proportion as it obscures or permits the soul's perception of the truth<sup>15</sup>. For Macrobius the body is the infernal prison in which we are tortured by our desires. Death's brother, Sleep, like Death itself, is a means of liberation. At least three early medieval manuscripts of Macrobius gloss the veil as the consequence of the soul's incarnation, while one ascribes true dreams to the divine spirit and another quotes Servius' allegory<sup>16</sup>.

Macrobius was widely read during the early middle ages but far more influential were the Church Fathers. They however interpreted Virgil in the light of his commentators and of their own Neoplatonic assumptions. Their opposition to pagan doctrines such as metempsychosis and the soul's imprisonment in the body, did not prevent them from approving of many of the poem's ideas and seeking to detect in it intuitions of the true faith. Lactantius cited the two Gates as showing that some dreams are true and some false, but denied that dreams came from Hell. True dreams came from God and false ones from the dreamer's own desires<sup>17</sup>. The pagan association of dreams and the dead was opposed by the Christians but the dead nevertheless reasserted themselves, first of all in the guise of saints, and then

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14 Macrobius *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (trans) W.H.Stahl (Columbia U.P., New York, 1952) pp 88-89. Virgil coined the word *insomnia* and used it only twice, once in the context of the Ivory Gate, and once in describing Dido's fevered imaginings of Aeneas. Both passages are modelled on Greek exemplars which use the word *enypnion* to designate non-predictive dreams, see G.Highet *The Speeches in Virgil's Aeneid* (Princeton U.P., 1972) p.110. Elsewhere Virgil employs the normal Latin word *somnium* to describe non-mantic dreams, as when he refers to the *somnia vana*. *Insomnia* was used in the classical period to designate wakefulness. If we disregard Virgil, Pliny the Elder, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., was the first to use it in the sense of dream. *Insomnia* meaning "sleeplessness" is 1<sup>st</sup> declension feminine singular while *insomnia* meaning "dreams" is 2<sup>nd</sup> declension neuter plural, but the distinction is often difficult to draw, see R.J.Getty "Insomnia in the Lexica" *American Journal of Philology* LIV (1933) 1-28, Austin 1977 p 277. By the time of Macrobius the popularity of *insomnium* to designate a meaningless dream seems to have caused a rehabilitation of *somnium* which Macrobius uses to designate a true dream requiring decoding, that is a symbolic dream. Getty 1933, followed by F.de Ruyt "Note de vocabulaire virgilien: somnia et insomnia" *Latomus* 5 (1946) 245-248, has argued that Virgil meant *falsa insomnia* to describe an illusory condition of wakefulness. This accords with the Platonic view of life as an illusory dream from which death awakens us to the truth. Aeneas and the Sybil go out by the Ivory Gate because they are returning to the false wakefulness of this world. Dido's *insomnia*, being due to her lust for Aeneas, is similarly a consequence of the illusions of the bodily state. *Falsa insomnia* and the *somnia vana* associated with physical life, are both opposed to the true revelations provided by spirits, the *verae umbrae*, which awaken one from the lethargy in which false dreams detain one.

15 Macrobius/Stahl p.92.

16 Peden, A. *Glosses Composed before the XII<sup>th</sup> Century in Ms. of Macrobius' Commentary on Cicero's Somnium Scipionis* (Ph.D., Oxford, 1981) p.91.

17 Courcelle 1955 p.62; see also P.Courcelle "Interprétations Néoplatonisantes du Livre VI de l'Énéide" in P.Courcelle *Recherches sur la Tradition Platonicienne* Vol.III (Hardt, Geneva, 1955) 95-125 .

as souls temporarily released from Purgatory to warn and solicit help from their relatives<sup>18</sup>.

The reliance of even religious scholars on the Neoplatonic commentaries can be seen from a tenth-century copy of the *Aeneid*, which appears to have belonged to the famous Gerbert of Rheims, later Pope Sylvester II. It has notes taken from the Servius and Servius Danielis commentaries, as well as additional notes in a late tenth or eleventh-century hand. These include a gloss on the Tree of Dreams. The gloss cites the belief that autumn dreams are false, and goes on to explain that the elm is a fruitless tree whose leaves perish when they lack sap. Similarly dreams are vain if their delusory surface is not interpreted by a prudent mind<sup>19</sup>. Thus once again a metaphor on the vanity of dreams is transformed into a statement affirming their significance.

In his *Policraticus* the twelfth century humanist John of Salisbury expressed a more strictly orthodox scepticism, treating dream interpretation as a form of divination. He drew on both Macrobius and Servius, but emphasised their more negative comments. He repeated the Neoplatonic allegory of the Gates and also the eye/teeth metaphor. Accepting the Macrobian distinction between meaningful *somnia* and meaningless *insomnia*, he nevertheless referred to the latter as predominating in autumn, equating them with the *somnia vana* of the Tree of Dreams<sup>20</sup>. The oracular dreams which inspire Aeneas to the foundation of Rome provided John with an example of the evil that demons cause through dreams, as well as a pretext for an attack on the Romans, who were a favourite target of medieval satirists<sup>21</sup>.

A more sympathetic approach, and a typical example of the medieval recuperation of pagan literature through allegory, may be seen in the *Aeneid* commentary attributed to Bernard Sylvester which develops the interpretation of the *Aeneid* as an allegory of human life proposed by the sixth-century mythographer Fulgentius. The sixth book represents the sixth age of man, namely death and descent to the lower regions. Fulgentius, however, has

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18 On the history of Christian attitudes to the dead, see Le Goff 1981.

19 J.J.H.Savage "Mediaeval Notes on the Sixth *Aeneid* in Parisinus 7930" *Speculum* 9 (1934) 204-212, see p.208; J.J.H.Savage "The Ms. of the Commentary of Servius Danielis on Virgil" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* XLIII (1932) 77-121 argues that the Servius Danielis commentary is a conflation of the Servius commentary with the now lost commentary of his predecessor, Donatus; about 20 manuscripts survive.

20 John of Salisbury *Policraticus: Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers* (trans) J.B.Pike (Octagon, New York, 1972) pp.75-78.

21 John of Salisbury/Pike p.80.

nothing to say about dreams apart from glossing the golden bough as laurel, a plant sacred to Apollo and hence a promoter of true dreams as well as a symbol of wisdom and learning<sup>22</sup>. Fulgentius may be implying by this that the underworld descent should be understood as a true dream containing important insights.

The sixth book was not only regarded as the most profound part of the *Aeneid*, but it was also thought to in a sense encapsulate the rest, and accordingly it is the subject of most of the Sylvester commentary<sup>23</sup>. As a descent to the lower world it represents: i) the soul's incorporation in the body, ii) contemplation of the created as a way to the creator, iii) attachment to worldly things, and iv) the mantic search for knowledge of the future. The Sylvester commentary concentrates on the second and fourth of these allegories. It ends before the Gates of Dreams but devotes a lengthy passage to the Tree. The night into which Aeneas and the Sibyl descend is glossed as temporal life, as opposed to the day of eternal life. The shade is natural ignorance, death's house is temporal goods, the path is contemplation, and so on. Death's vestibule is the surface of the earth, wherein are situated the Tree and its attendant terrors. The Elm denotes the human body which though sterile yet sustains fruitful life, that is the soul. The leaves are thoughts under which lurk the vain dreams to which they give rise. The author then explains that our internal fire both enables us to see while awake and affords us repose by inducing sleep through the action of the digestive fumes<sup>24</sup>.

Since the inner fire has just been described as an aspect of that incorporation by which the soul forgets its true nature, it would seem that the author is drawing upon the recent translation of Aristotle's *De somno* in order to present a materialist view of dreams as illusory by-products of the physical state. Combined with the psychological theory implied by glossing the leaves as thoughts, this fits the allegory well. It is nevertheless slightly surprising to find such a materialist theory in the context of an allegorical interpretation stressing spiritual values. It tends to support the recent suggestion by J.W.Jones that the Sylvester commentary had absorbed a now lost

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22 *Fulgentius the Mythographer* (trans) L.G. Whitbread (Ohio State U.P., 1971) pp.55, 129.

23 On the commentary see J.R.O'Donnell "The Sources and Meaning of Bernard Silvester's Commentary on the *Aeneid*" *Mediaeval Studies* XXIV (1962) 233-249 and D.M.Stone *The Mathematicus of Bernardus Silvestris* (Ph.D., Sydney Uni., 1988). Stone is particularly interested in the relationship between the *Aeneid* commentary and the *Mathematicus*, a poem which has also been attributed to Bernard Silvester. More generally on the philosophical background to Virgilian commentary see M.Murrin *The Allegorical Epic* (Chicago U.P., 1980) and Courcelle 1955.

24 *The Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid of Virgil Commonly Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris* (ed) J.W. & E.F.Jones (Uni. of Nebraska P., London, 1977) pp.68-70.

commentary by William of Conches, a writer known for his interest in the physical sciences<sup>25</sup>. Whatever the source, it is a characteristic example of the Neoplatonic appropriation of an Aristotelian doctrine. Whereas Aristotle had intended to deny the supernatural nature of dreams by providing a physical explanation for them, his explanation is here used to support the Platonic association of materiality and illusion, and hence implicitly the association of spirituality with truth which underlay the Neoplatonic belief in true dreams. The commentator has already glossed the relationship of sleep and death in this sense - both are a separation from the body. This treatment of Aristotelian theory is by no means unusual. The interest of twelfth century writers in the physiology of dreaming did not diminish their belief in its religious and mantic properties. The belief that morning dreams were true was a classical response to the digestive theory, for by morning the effects of digestion were thought to have worn off. In a similar manner the Neoplatonic metaphor of the soul peering through a veil attempted to grant a place to the material while affirming the supremacy of the spiritual. In the dream vision poem, morning joined spring as a guarantee of truth. Neither in classical nor medieval times does the corollary, namely the falsity of dreams before midnight or in autumn, seem to have been esteemed of any importance<sup>26</sup>. In the twelfth century, as in the late antique period, Aristotle continued to be seen through Neoplatonic spectacles<sup>27</sup>.

In one fourteenth-century manuscript the Sylvester commentary has been continued to the end of Book VI by another author. He glossed the Gates from both Servius and Macrobius - from Servius the eye/teeth metaphor and the observation that Aeneas' exit by the Ivory Gate signifies his story is partly fabulous and false; from Macrobius the Porphyrian metaphor of the Horn's translucency. The false dreams sent by the Dead to their sky are interpreted as the sensory images sent by the body to the soul<sup>28</sup>. This follows from combining Servius' equation of the *somnia vana* and the *falsa insomnia* with the Sylvester gloss on the *somnia vana* as the vain dreams arising from our thoughts. It continues the use of a materialist theory associating dreams with bodily states to serve the Neoplatonic association of the material and the illusory.

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25 J.W.Jones Jnr. "The So-Called Silvestris Commentary on the *Aeneid* and Two Other Interpretations" *Speculum* 64 (1989) 843f.

26 See J.B.Stearns *Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama* (Lancaster, Princeton, 1927) pp.51-69 on the irrelevance of the time of dreams in Latin literature.

27 See H.J.Blumenthal "Neoplatonic Elements in the De Anima Commentaries" *Phronesis* 21 (1976) 64-87 on similar bias in late antique Aristotelian commentaries.

28 Sylvester/Jones pp.127-128.

Among the *roman antiqués* produced in the twelfth century was the *Enéas*, an Old French version of the *Aeneid*. This adaptation omits most of the *Aeneid* dreams as part of a general elimination of pagan deities, but faithfully reproduces Book VI, including its pagan philosophy. Both the Tree and the Gates of Dreams are described but the translator forbears to comment upon the original<sup>29</sup>. Clearly a romance writer had different concerns from a philosophical commentator. The dream visits from pagan gods may have been an embarrassment, since from the Christian point of view they meant that the hero was in league with demons. We have already seen that this was John of Salisbury's attitude. One of the few dreams to survive elimination is the vision in which Anchises reminds his son of his illustrious lineage and instructs him to seek land and a wife in Lombardy<sup>30</sup>. Not only the ancestral lineage dream, but also the underworld descent appealed to popular medieval taste. Romance and otherworld visions were overlapping genres and the otherworld journey was very much a speciality of the romance hero<sup>31</sup>. The descent fitted the presentation of Enéas as a twelfth century hero, while the philosophical content was presumably not regarded as sufficiently threatening to warrant suppression. After all, there were no shortage of Christians who found the philosophy broadly acceptable.

Virgil was exceedingly popular in the Middle Ages and since his comments on dreams had such a substantial impact it is perhaps appropriate that dreams were used by his Christian opponents to combat his pagan influence. St.Odo, having conceived a desire to read Virgil, is said to have dreamt of a beautiful vessel full of poisonous serpents which twined themselves about him. Awaking, he realised the serpents were the pernicious doctrines hidden in the beautiful vessel of Virgil's poetry. Here the association between the false surface and the true content is reversed. St.Hugo of Cluny dreamt there were snakes under his pillow and awoke to discover a copy of Virgil there, while still other scholars were tormented and tempted by visions of devils in the guise of Virgil or his characters. The eleventh century grammarian, Vilgard of Ravenna, was condemned for heresy because a dream visit from Virgil, Horace and Juvenal had inspired him to teach reverence for the pagan poets<sup>32</sup>.

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29 *Eneas* (ed) J.Salverda de Grave (Niemeyer, Halle, 1891) p.90f.; see also R.J.Cormier *One Heart One Mind: The Rebirth of Virgil's Hero in Medieval French Romance* (Mississippi U.P., 1973) pp.83, 178-187.

30 C.Marchello-Nizia "De l'Enéide à l'Eneas: les attributs du fondateur" p.256 in *Lectures Médiévales* 1985.

31 Le Goff 1981 p.262.

32 Comparetti 1895,1966 pp.92-93.

It was the perceived resemblance between aspects of Virgil's philosophy and Christianity which gave rise to such fears of contamination<sup>33</sup>. Medieval commentators found in Virgil support for the Neoplatonic theory of dreaming as a revelation of the truth arising from a separation of the soul from the body, a separation which became absolute only in death. While the contrast between the Gates of Horn and Ivory superficially encouraged a simple dichotomy into true and false dreams, this dichotomy was undermined by the commentators who took false as meaning literally untrue but symbolically true. Such equivocation was part of the necessarily ambivalent approach to pagan literature of those Christians who were unwilling to simply dismiss it as demonic lies. It was an attitude which ultimately extended to all secular poetry. As it defended literature from the attacks of the moralists, so it defended the symbolic dream which was equally an object of mistrust. The opposition between the true oracle and the false dream was attenuated into a distinction between degrees and kinds of truth. Such a distinction accorded with the Neoplatonic view of a graduated escape from the illusions of the bodily state. Even when materialist theories of dreams became common in the twelfth century, they served only to support this model by providing an explanation for the false appearance of symbolic dreams. Medieval commentators saw *Aeneid VI* as a dream, hence as something that was symbolically true while literally untrue. From a Neoplatonic and a religious perspective the dream resembles earthly life, which is essentially an illusion but which leads to the truth if properly understood. From the point of view of defenders of secular learning the dream resembles pagan knowledge, again false in itself but capable of revealing truth if correctly contemplated.

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33 Modern commentators have thrown doubts on the philosophical consistency of *Aeneid VI*, suggesting that Virgil failed to reconcile disparate mythological elements. L.A.Mackay "Three Levels of Meaning in *Aeneid VI*" *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 86 (1955) 180-189 traces three different views of the afterlife in *Aeneid VI*. Otis 1959 suggests that the confusion is intended as a characteristic of the dream state and that *Aeneid VI*, as a dream, is essentially concerned with the psychological problems of the dreamer, Aeneas. P.Kragelund *Dream and Prediction in the Aeneid: A Semiotic Interpretation of the Dreams of Aeneas and Turnus* (Tusculanum, Copenhagen, 1976) provides a useful corrective to such reductionism, demonstrating that Freudian and semiotic interpretations of several *Aeneid* dreams agree with those of the ancient commentators for whom psychological and mantic significance were not necessarily mutually exclusive.