

**CONTENTS**

Thomas Van Nortwick: *Apollōnos Apatē*: Associative Imagery in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* 227-292. . . . 1

Beert C. Verstraete: The Implication of the Epicurean and Lucretian Theory of Dreams for *Falsa Insomnia* in *Aeneid* 6.896 . . . . . 7

In the Schools . . . . . 11

Notes and News . . . . . 15

CAAS Update. . . . . 17

CAAS: Minutes of Seventy-third Annual Meeting, May 3, 1980 . . . . . 19

CAAS: Revised By-laws . . . . . 21

NYCC, NYU, CAAS: Program of Joint Meeting, New York City, October 24 and 25, 1980. . . . . 27

Reviews . . . . . 33

Books Received. . . . . 45

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The criteria for acceptance of articles submitted are: originality, clarity, accuracy. Useful rules for the preparation of copy may be found at the end of *TAPA* 109 (1979), and, in previous volumes of that journal, in the *Proceedings* of the APA. Authors are directed to conform to the style of *TAPA* in preparing footnotes.

It is expected that the *mss* submitted for consideration will be in publishable form.

THE IMPLICATION OF THE EPICUREAN  
AND LUCRETIAN THEORY OF  
DREAMS FOR *FALSA INSOMNIA* IN *AENEID* 6.896.

In a study that appeared in 1944 of Vergil's use of Lucretian concepts and images in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Agnes Michels proposed that Aeneas' departure through the Gate of Ivory (through which the *manes* send false dreams to the world above) contains a significant hint as to the "scientific" explanation of the hero's passage through Hades, namely that Aeneas' *katabasis* should be understood as a dream-experience.<sup>1</sup> She sets the contentious problem of the symbolic meaning of the Gate of Ivory in the light of the Lucretian (and, therefore, Epicurean) theory of the *imagines* or *simulacra*, of which she finds a strong intimation in Vergil's description of the beginning stage of Aeneas' journey, specifically in the entrance portal to Hades where the hero sees a tree with *somnia vana* clinging to it and is then confronted by monstrous apparitions of such mythical creatures as the Centaurs and the *Scyllae* (6.285-294).

Aeneas' departure through the Gate of Ivory, the Gate of False Dreams, will indeed appear less puzzling and unexpected if it is compared to his initial encounter with *somnia vana* and phantasmagorical monsters, but the relevance of Lucretius' actual explanation of dream-experience to the symbolical meaning of the Gate of Ivory and especially to the psychological implication of *falsa insomnia* needs to be more clearly established. I do not argue for this relevance on purely speculative grounds. The relevance of Lucretian and Epicurean psychology to the conundrum posed by Aeneas' departure through the Gate of Ivory can be validly maintained on the basis of Vergil's early intellectual and literary development, to which the philosophy of Epicurus and the poetry of Lucretius made a very considerable contribution.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as we shall see, there are powerful indications even in the *Aeneid* that Vergil has not entirely abandoned the critical perspective of Epicureanism in favour of a more mystically oriented sense of life.

Many readers and critics have, of course, observed that a broad and suggestive connection is established in Book Six between dream-experience and Aeneas' supernatural venture into the afterlife.<sup>3</sup> Above all, I

<sup>1</sup> Agnes Michels, "Lucretius and the Sixth Book of the *Aeneid*," *AJP* 65 (1944) 147-48.

<sup>2</sup> On Vergil's early Epicurean studies see A. Rostagni, *Virgilio Minore* (Rome 1961) ch. 7; for the specifically Lucretian influences on Vergil's thought and language in the *Aeneid*, see the studies surveyed by A. Dalzell, "A Bibliography of Work on Lucretius: 1945-1972," *CW* 66 (1973) 103-04; also M. Wigodsky, "Vergil and the Early Latin Poets," *Hermes Einzelschriften* 24 (Wiesbaden 1972) 132-39.

<sup>3</sup> See especially Brooks Otis, "Three Problems of *Aeneid* 6," *TAPA* 90 (1959) 176-79; also *Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford 1964) 304-05.

think, the description of Aeneas' and the Sibyl's approach to Hades (6.268-272), with its images of movement through a strangely empty and nocturnal landscape, is wonderfully evocative of dream-experience:<sup>4</sup>

ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram  
perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna  
quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna  
est iter in silvis, ubi caelum condidit umbra  
Iuppiter, et rebus nox abstulit colorem.

The suggestion of dream-experience, here and elsewhere in Book Six (cf. 6.285-294, already referred to) is made only in oblique fashion. Michels' conclusion that Aeneas' and the Sibyl's departure through the Gate of False Dreams places them "in the same category as the *falsa insomnia*,"<sup>5</sup> presses for a one-to-one identification which we should not impose on the rich and complex allusiveness of Vergil's poetry. Even on the basis of common-sense logic one might argue, as Austin does in his recent commentary on the sixth book,<sup>6</sup> that Aeneas' departure through the Gate of False Dreams does not necessarily assimilate his experience to that of a false dream. Vergil only suggests a dream-aspect to Aeneas' experience, and with his vague allusiveness in this regard he has placed his own poetic interpretation on a tradition which already existed in Roman literature, namely that Aeneas had been vouchsafed an apocalyptic dream prior to his final settlement in Latium.<sup>7</sup>

However, we are still left with the puzzling question of why Aeneas is made to depart through the Gate of False Dreams. A careful consideration of the psychological implication of *falsa insomnia* is necessary to come to meaningful terms with this problem. It is not sufficient to interpret *falsa* as "not literal," as Brooks Otis does.<sup>8</sup> Reed objects quite properly that this interpretation evades the unmistakably negative connotation of *falsa*.<sup>9</sup> However, his own explanation of *falsa insomnia* is even less satisfactory: he regards *insomnia* as being synonymous with *umbris* (6.894) and interprets *veris umbris* as true apparitions of the dead, for which the Gate of Horn, of course, serves as an exit, and *falsa insomnia* as false apparitions, such as ordinary dreams, which are sent through the Gate of Ivory; since Aeneas is not a "true apparition," he must depart through the latter gate.<sup>10</sup> It is hard to believe that Aeneas should have to leave through the Gate of Ivory because he is not a "true apparition"—

<sup>4</sup> Michels, *op. cit.*, 145-46, compares this passage with a description of dream-experience in Lucretius 4.453-461, on which she comments: ". . . I should think that anyone who had ever had a nightmare or a high fever would recognize the shadow which then surrounds the light in which one moves and the endless wandering under a lowering sky."

<sup>5</sup> Michels, *op. cit.*, 147.

<sup>6</sup> R.G. Austin, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus* (Oxford 1977) 275.

<sup>7</sup> In Cicero's *De Divinatione* 1.21, the Stoic Quintus admits that certain famous dreams reported by tradition are only literary fictions and singles out Aeneas' vision as an example, ascribing the fiction to the early Roman historian Fabius Pictor.

<sup>8</sup> Brooks Otis, *TAPA* 90 (1959) 176; cf. also *Virgil*, 304.

<sup>9</sup> N. Reed, "The Gates of Sleep," *CQ* 23 (1973) 312.

<sup>10</sup> Reed, *op. cit.*, 313-15.

such an explanation, it seems to me, makes the Gate of Ivory little more than a convenience exit for the hero and ignores the pointed significance of *falsa insomnia*.

This significance becomes clear if we examine the psychological implication of *falsa insomnia* in the light of the Epicurean and Lucretian theory of dreams. Unlike the Stoics, the Epicureans denied any oracular or mystical import to dream-experience. This view is trenchantly stated by Epicurus and coupled with a concise explanation of the cause of dream-experience: "Dreams have no divine character nor any prophetic force but originate from the influx of images" (*Vatican Sayings*, 24). Lucretius gives in Book 4.757-826 (822), 962-1036 the most extensive account we possess of the Epicurean psychology of dreams. Dreaming is explained as basically a mode of seeing and perceiving directly with the mind (*animus*). Not surprisingly, therefore, Lucretius' account of dream-experience follows immediately upon his explanation of the workings of the imagination (4.722-756). 4.757-764 is crucial in Lucretius' account of how the mind functions in dream-experience: during sleep the sensory organs are no longer active, while the mind is bombarded by a constant stream of *imagines* which, provided they are of sufficiently fine texture, can directly impinge on it. The mind thus becomes little more than a passive receptacle for the flux of *imagines*. In a subsequent section (4.962-1036), Lucretius describes by means of vivid examples drawn from the wealth of human experience how dreams are only confused, kaleidoscopic reflections of waking experience; thus, by clear implication, he attaches no "extraordinary" importance to them: from a scientific point of view, dreams are as ordinary and explicable as waking behaviour and experience.<sup>11</sup>

Particularly relevant to an understanding of Vergil's *falsa insomnia* is Lucretius' insistence in 4.762-764 that since the sensory organs do not function during sleep they cannot provide the sleeping person any more with the pre-requisite criteria for distinguishing true from false, that is, in Epicurean terms, the real from the unreal.<sup>12</sup> *Falsa*, then, in Vergil's *falsa insomnia* (like *vana* in *somnia vana* in *Aen.* 6.283-284) is a generic epithet pointing to the illusory and counterfeit nature of all dream-experience. Thus the contrast between the Gate of Horn and the Gate of Ivory hinges upon a contrast between real apparitions (*veris umbris*) of the dead and false, unreal dreams—all dream-experience being only a counterfeit simulation of waking experience. Aeneas, significantly, does not depart through the Gate of Horn, the exit for the true shades of the dead, which affirms, as it were, the reality of the afterlife; instead, his departure takes place through the Gate of Ivory, which is associated with

<sup>11</sup> The belief that dreams do not have any supernatural significance but are only reflections of waking experience is the theme of a poem attributed to Petronius and obviously inspired by Lucretius' account (PLM 121); cf. especially the first three lines:

Somnia quae mentes ludunt volitantibus umbris/non delubra deum nec de aethere numina mittunt/sed sibi quisque facit. . .

<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, too, in his account Lucretius points to the illusory character of dream-experience with such phrases as *frustrata tenere* (4.972) and *discussis. . .erroribus* (4.997).

illusory dream-experience. It is almost ironical that Vergil makes the *manes*, the powers of the dead, the purveyors of *falsa insomnia*; it is as though for a passing moment a sceptical perspective suddenly takes hold on Vergil's complex and richly articulated evocation of the afterlife.

With Aeneas' departure, then, through the Gate of False Dreams, the Sixth Book ends on a note of doubt and scepticism, in which one may detect a faint reverberation of the critical realism of the philosophy of Epicurus and Lucretius. This final note does not radically subvert what has preceded, certainly not the sublime cosmology and eschatology of 6.724-751 or the lofty vision of Roman destiny in 6.756-892—but it does make heard an alternative voice which, albeit brief, is too telling to be passed over.

I would finally observe that elsewhere, too, in the *Aeneid* this voice of sceptical realism may be heard. In 4.65-66, in the midst of the account of Dido's love-madness and her frantic endeavours to propitiate the will of the gods, the poet-narrator suddenly utters a sad exclamation over the futility of her efforts: *heu, vatium ignarae mentes! quid vota furentem, / quid delubra iuvant?* . . . Even more powerful and more psychologically reflective is the tragic insight in Nisus' haunting words to Euryalus in 9.184-185: . . . *dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt, / Euryale, an sua cuique deus fit dira cupido?* Such outbursts do not constitute, as it were, an Epicurean-inspired anti-*Aeneid*, but they do hint at a strong plea for a realistic alternative perspective to the heavily charged sense of the numinous which dominates the *Aeneid*. The sceptical conclusion of Book Six, as I interpret it, perhaps raises that plea most forcefully.

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BEERT C. VERSTRAETE

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