

Zeitschrift: Museum Helveticum : schweizerische Zeitschrift für klassische Altertumswissenschaft = Revue suisse pour l'étude de l'antiquité classique = Rivista svizzera di filologia classica

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Vereinigung für Altertumswissenschaft

Band: 80 (2023)

Heft: 2

Artikel: Colluthus' Helen and the Virgilian Gates of Sleep

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1049884>

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Colluthus' Helen and the Virgilian Gates of Sleep

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Abstracts: Le départ d'Énée des Enfers via les Portes du Sommeil à la fin du 6^{ème} livre de l'*Énéide* de Virgile a suscité d'importants commentaires. L'étude de certains passages similaires dans la poésie grecque hellénistique et impériale (en particulier dans l'*Hélène* de Colluthus) révélera des correspondances qui ont des implications pour la représentation virgilienne d'Énée, et aussi pour la présentation de la guerre dans le Latium.

Keywords: Colluthus, Virgile, Hélène, Paris, Portes du Sommeil.

One of the relatively few extant examples of imperial Greek miniature epic is the poem on the abduction of Helen by the late fifth-/early sixth-century author Colluthus.¹ Just under four hundred hexameters provide a narration of the proximate cause of the war at Troy, with Menelaus' wife Helen depicted as a willing paramour of the ill-fated Trojan prince Paris. Like other surviving works of the rich and varied tradition of later Greek epic, Colluthus has been relatively neglected in classical scholarship, even as a potential source of intertextual comment on the work of his antecedents in the genre.

Colluthus' poem offers a vignette of a crucial chain of events in the setting into motion of the Trojan conflict, the climax of which comes in a nocturnal scene in which Helen makes her surreptitious, momentous departure from her husband's Laconian home. We shall see that in several regards the culmination of Colluthus' epyllion serves as something of a commentary on a recurring image of Greek and Latin verse, an image that in the poet Virgil poses a notorious puzzle for his interpreters: the Gates of Sleep whence oneiric visions are sent to mortals, namely the Gate of Horn for true dreams, and of Ivory for false. Answers horological; allegorical;² metaphysical; pessimistic;³ neo-Platonic;⁴ and Lucretian⁵ may offer valuable insights into the complex literary, philosophical, and political games at work in the closing verses of *Aeneid* 6. We shall consider what insights Colluthus' allusion to the storied Gates may provide by way of exegesis of a poetic enigma. While much has been written on the Virgilian Gates in particular, rela-

1 For commentary and general introduction see especially C. Cadau, *Studies in Colluthus' Abduction of Helen* [Leiden/Boston: Brill 2015]. For full commentary on the epyllion see E. Livrea, *Il ratto di Elena* [Bologna: Pàtron Editore 1968]. I am grateful for the corrections and suggestions of the anonymous referee, which significantly improved this study.

2 See, e.g., A. Thornton, *The Living Universe: Gods and Men in Virgil's Aeneid* [Leiden: Brill, 1976] 61.

3 Cf. *inter al.* W.J. Dominik, "Reading Vergil's *Aeneid*: The Gates of Sleep (6.893–898)", *Maia* 48.2 [1996] 129–138; also T.J. Haarhoff, "The Gates of Sleep", *Greece & Rome* Volume 17, Issue 50 [June 1948] 88–90.

4 Note here e.g. R.J. Tarrant, "Aeneas and the Gates of Sleep", *Classical Philology* 77 [1982] 51–55.

5 Cf. L. Fratantuono, "A Brief Reflection on the Gates of Sleep", in *Latomus*, T. 66, Fasc. 3 [Juillet–Septembre 2007] 628–635.

tively little effort has been expended on tracing the mysterious image from Homer through imperial Greek verse. While one must exercise due caution in intertextual studies given the relatively small surviving corpus of Greek and Latin literature, certain interesting and thus far unnoticed connections and parallels emerge from the extant poetic references to the Gates.⁶

The question of the possible influence of Latin poetry on imperial Greek literature poses a certain difficulty, in that we lack definitive evidence to assure us that imperial Greek poets, for instance, read and engaged with earlier works of Latin verse.⁷ While it is certain that Augustan Virgil was intimately familiar with archaic and Hellenistic Greek verse, it is a more difficult question to know the extent to which a Greek poet as late as Colluthus would be familiar with Virgil. Our consideration of the exegetical challenge posed by the Virgilian Gates depends on a reading of Homer and Moschus alongside later passages that mention these dream portals; study of Colluthus' mention of the phenomenon will reveal the likelihood that Virgil was much on the poet's mind, even if certainty is impossible.

We may turn to Colluthus' scene. It was toward the end of night, and the Spartan girl was ready to elope with her eastern lover. Dawn was about to open the storied Gates of Sleep, just as Paris was in the act of carrying his erotic prize out of her lawful bower:

- νύξ δέ, πόνων ἄμπαυμα μετ' ἡελίοιο κελεύθους,
 ὕπνον ἐλαφρίζουσα, παρήγορον ὥπασεν ἡῶ
 320 ἀρχομένην· δοιάς δὲ πύλας ὤϊζεν ὄνειρων,
 τὴν μὲν ἀληθείης – κεράων ἀπελάμπετο κόσμος –
 ἔνθεν ἀναθρώσκουσι θεῶν νημερτέες ὁμφαί,
 τὴν δὲ δολοφροσύνης, κενεῶν θρέπτειραν ὄνειρων.
 αὐτὰρ ὁ ποντοπόρων Ἑλένην ἐπὶ σέλματα νηῶν
 325 ἐκ θαλάμων ἐκόμισσε φιλοξείνου Μενελάου,
 κυδιόων δ' ὑπέροπλον ὑποσχασίῃ Κυθερείης
 φόρτον ἄγων ἔσπευδεν ἐς Ἴλιον ἰωχμοῖο.⁸

Colluthus makes a clear association between the promise of Aphrodite at the Judgment of Paris (326 ὑποσχασίῃ Κυθερείης) and the coming toil of war. There is no actual dream here, rather an all too haunting reality: Helen truly is being abducted, and martial conflict will ensue soon enough. The Gates are a poetic marker of

6 In prose, Plato, *Charmides* 173a offers a passing reference of Socrates to the Homeric lore.

7 Cf. further here U. Gärtner, *Quintus Smyrnaeus und die Eneas* [München: Verlag C. H. Beck 2005], on the difficult question of the relationship of a celebrated imperial Greek epic to Virgil; also D. Jolowicz, *Latin Poetry in the Ancient Greek Novels* [Oxford 2021], especially 4 (on later Greek epics) and 28–33 (on methodologies for exploring the possible intertextual relationship between later Greek and earlier Latin authors).

8 Quotations from Colluthus are taken from P. Orsini, ed., *Collouthos: L'enlèvement d'Hélène* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres 1972].

the late hour of the night, of a time when dreams are common.⁹ Paris and his Spartan prize do not transit the Gates; the temporal reference to them is part of an evocative description of the pre-dawn abduction.

But there will be a nocturnal vision involving Helen, and it will be a false one of the sort that is sent forth from the Ivory Gate: Helen will seem to appear to her daughter Hermione as she slumbers (366 ff.), and there are in fact two levels of deceit at play in her apparition. First and foremost, Helen is not actually appearing to Hermione – she is no shade in the afterlife who might visit a slumbering mortal as a revenant, no divine being who seeks to convey a dream message: Hermione merely thinks that she is seeing her mother (372). Second, Helen blames Paris for everything, and she credits the Trojan with deceiving her (380) – an estimation of events utterly at variance with her voluntary departure from home as just related by the poet. There is thus a metaphorical false dream, and a deceptive vision that is all too real: Helen's departure with Paris carries the promise not so much of love as of war, while Hermione's dream is one of lies that absolve Helen of culpability. This is a dream, we may reasonably conclude, from the Ivory Gate (whatever the hour of night). We are not told of any deity who sent the false dream to Hermione. But lest we forget that the travails of war will be the price of Helen's infidelity, Colluthus notes that Sleep is, after all, the brother of Death (364). Bloody violence will result from the reckless abduction of Helen. Colluthus' poem ends with Hermione in vain search for her mother even to the borders of Europe and Asia, as Troy welcomes back Paris, the source of his city's future grief (385 ff.).

Colluthus' image of the Gates of Sleep and the true and false dreams that transit thereby is deeply indebted to the opening of another epyllion, the Hellenistic *Europa* of the celebrated Sicilian bucolic poet Moschus:

Εὐρώπῃ ποτὲ Κύπρις ἐπὶ γλυκὺν ἦκεν ὄνειρον,
νυκτὸς ὅτε τρίτατον λάχος ἴσταται, ἐγγύθι δ' ἠώς,
ὕπνος ὅτε γλυκίων μέλιτος βλεφάροισιν ἐφίζων
λυσιμελῆς πεδάα μαλακῶ κατὰ φάεα δεσμῶ,
εὔτε καὶ ἀτρεκέων ποιμαίνεται ἔθνος ὀνείρων.¹⁰

Europa is sent a dream by Aphrodite at the third watch of the night, in the hour when true dreams are said to be sent forth to mortals.¹¹ The dream of Europa is that

⁹ The theory that true dreams came after midnight (and false ones therefore before) is rightly argued against by H. Steiner, *Der Traum in der Aeneis* [Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt 1952] 94. There is no evidence for the belief in the epic poets; certainly, in Virgil it is difficult to imagine that Aeneas is envisioned as exiting the lower world before midnight: cf. e.g. the temporal marker of 6.535 ff., where the Sibyl warns Aeneas that the night is rushing on in its course just as the pair arrive at the junction of Tartarus and Elysium.

¹⁰ Moschus is cited from A.S.F. Gow, ed., *Bucolici Graeci* [Oxford 1952].

¹¹ For commentary note M. Campbell, *Europa* (Alttertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien 19) [Hildesheim: Olms/Weidemann 1991], *ad loc.*

two lands were in struggle for the possession of her: Europe and Asia were both in strife for control of the girl, with Europe having the claim of kinship. Asia, however, was supported by the will of Zeus the aegis-bearer. The dream was all too true: Zeus would abduct Europa. The mythological scene has several affinities to that of Helen and Paris: once again there is the question of Europe and Asia, and of the abduction of a girl from west to east. The dream may be true, but the result is the same as a Greek girl is abducted to Asia. Colluthus' appropriation of Moschus' image is fitting: the Hellenistic poet employed it in association with the abduction of Europa, and the imperial author has it of Paris' absconding with Helen. In both poets there is no actual transit of the Gates by the two couples in question.¹² Central to the opening of Moschus' epyllion is the evocative image of the meeting of the continents, of Europe and Asia and the slender divide between them; this is the same theme as at the end of Colluthus' work, as Troy welcomes Paris and Hermione searches the borderland of the continents in hope of reunion with her lost mother.

The dream portals of Moschus and Colluthus figure in three longer poetic works as well. The principal epic *Vorleben* for Colluthus' mention of the Gates of Sleep are passages from Homer's *Odyssey* (19.560–569); Virgil's *Aeneid* (6.893–899), and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* (34.89–90; 44.46ff.), all three of which likewise make reference to this particular feature of the world of shades and dreams.¹³ We shall examine closely Colluthus' debt both to Moschus and to his triad of epic predecessors, with a particular view to offering comment on and explication of the enigma of the Virgilian Gates. In the poetic tradition of the Gates and the problem of true *versus* false dreams we move from Homer to Moschus to Virgil, and then to Nonnus and Colluthus; careful study of the progression of passages will help to elucidate certain aspects of the poets' point in utilizing the evocative nocturnal image.

Contextually, in Colluthus the Gates of Sleep are referenced as Paris leads Helen to Troy; Menelaus' wife is identified as the φόρτον ... ἰωχμοῖο (327), the veritable baggage of war as the poet looks forward to the inevitable grim conflict between Greece and Troy, Europe and Asia. In Colluthus' possible Virgilian model, the Trojan hero Aeneas exits the underworld Gates at the very close of the first, Odyssean half of the poet's epic:

*Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur
cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris,*

895 *altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,*

¹² There is no subsequent dream in Moschus that corresponds to Hermione's vision in Colluthus.

¹³ The bibliography on the Gates of Sleep is formidable; cf. the bibliography assembled by A. Rozokoki, "Penelope's Dream in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*", *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 1 [2001] 1–6; also B. Haller, "The Gates of Horn and Ivory in *Odyssey* 19: Penelope's Call for Deeds, not Words", *Classical Philology*, Vol. 104, No. 4 [October 2009] 397–417; cf. J. Russo, "Penelope's Gates of Horn(s) and Ivory", A. Hurst and F. Létoublon, eds., *La mythologie d'Odysée: Hommages à Gabriel Germain (Actes du colloque international de Grenoble 20–22 mai 1999)* [Genève: Librairie Droz S.A., 2002] 223–230, and C. Anghelina, "The Homeric Gates of Horn and Ivory", *Museum Helveticum* 67 [2010] 65–72. For Colluthus' appropriation of the lore see Cadau, *loc. cit.* [n. 1] 259 ff.

*sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes.
his ibi tum natum Anchises unaque Sibyllam
prosequitur dictis portaque emittit eburna,
ille viam secat ad navis sociosque revisit.*

The Gates constitute something of a bridge between the two halves of the *Aeneid*;¹⁴ Aeneas will experience something of the rebirth of the *Iliad* in Italy, where he will do battle with his rival Turnus, ultimately for the hand of the princess Lavinia.¹⁵ In Colluthus the Gates are not an actual transit point for Paris and Helen; in Virgil the ghost of Anchises sends Aeneas and the Sibyl back to the upper world via the Ivory Gate of false dreams.¹⁶ The significance of the choice of the Ivory Gate is one of the enduring problems of Virgilian scholarship.¹⁷ Aeneas is not a true shade in the sense that he is a corporeal being and not a dream apparition; according to a strict application of logic he could not, one might argue, utilize the Gate of Horn. This explanation has not satisfied most critics of the passage, and the quest for understanding what implications the transit via the Ivory Gate may have had for the poet has resulted in a plethora of critical studies.

In both Virgil and Colluthus there are in effect three people connected to the Gates: Aeneas, the Sibyl, and Anchises at the close of *Aeneid* 6; Paris, Helen, and Menelaus in our imperial Greek poet. The circumstances of the two passages are vastly different, and yet Aeneas and Paris have striking affinities: we may compare the comments of the Latin queen Amata at *Aeneid* 7.363–364 *at non sic Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor, / Ledeamque Helenam Troianas vexit ad*

¹⁴ Useful here is the work of K.W. Gransden, *Virgil's Iliad: An Essay on Epic Narrative* [Cambridge 1984].

¹⁵ References to the *Somni portae* (or even simply to the clock, as it were, which true *versus* false dreams follow) are not common in surviving Latin literature; outside of epic cf. Horace, c. 3.27.40–42 (with R. Nisbet and N. Rudd, *A Commentary on Horace, Odes Book III* [Oxford 2004]; *Serm.* 1.10.31–33 on the usual hour of false visions (with E. Gowers, *Horace: Satires Book I* [Cambridge 2012]; Ovid, *Her.* 19.195 (reference to the customary hour of true dreams); Statius, *Silv.* 5.3.260 ff. on the hope of a visitation from a deceased parent's shade via the portal of true dreams (with B. Gibson, *Statius: Silvae 5* [Oxford 2006], *ad loc.*; the reference to the Ivory Gate at the end of Ausonius' poem on the crucifixion of Cupid (on which note N.G. Davis, "Cupid at the Ivory Gates: Ausonius as a Reader of Vergil's *Aeneid*", *Colby Quarterly*, Volume 30, no. 3 [September 1994] 162–170). Deceptive dreams are referenced in classical literature from Agamemnon's dream at the opening of *Iliad* 2 through such baroque descriptions of the lair of Sleep as found in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11 and Statius, *Thebaid* 10.

¹⁶ Virgil is thus the only extant author who depicts a living character as transiting the Gates; significantly, he does not present Aeneas' departure from the underworld in the manner of Homer with Odysseus (*Odyssey* 11.628–640).

¹⁷ See further N.M. Horsfall, ed., *Virgil, Aeneid 6* [Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2013], *ad loc.*, with ample bibliography. One of the finer studies is by N. Reed, "The Gates of Sleep in *Aeneid* 6", *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 [Nov., 1973] 311–315; cf. the classic treatment of A. Amory, "The Gates of Horn and Ivory", *Yale Classical Studies* 20 [1966] 3–57. No scholarly consensus has emerged on an answer to the problem (indeed, some have questioned whether there is any difficulty); R.G. Austin, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Sextus* [Oxford 1977], *ad loc.* memorably described it as a Virgilian enigma, "and none the worse for that."

urbes?,¹⁸ and especially the earlier remark of Aeneas' inveterate divine enemy Juno at 7.321 *quin idem Veneri partus suus et Paris alter*.¹⁹ Certainly the foes of Aeneas (both mortal and immortal) found it all too easy to see in him a reincarnation of Paris the abductor of Helen.²⁰ We may note here too that some scholars have seen echoes of Virgil's presentation of Aeneas on the cusp of his ill-fated affair with Dido in Colluthus' depiction of Paris' introduction of himself to Helen;²¹ the doomed relationship of the Trojan exile and the Carthaginian could easily enough make one think of the troubled union of Paris and Helen, not least in that both romances would lead to war.²² Within a relatively short compass of lines after his exit from the underworld via the Ivory Gate of false dreams, Aeneas will be accused of being akin to the Trojan prince whose adulterous dalliance served to set into motion the greatest war in epic history.

But what of Homer, whose reference to the Gates of Sleep no doubt influenced his Augustan poetic successor? In the *Odyssey*, Penelope has had a dream that would seem to indicate that her long-lost husband is about to return (19.535–550). She discusses it with the disguised Odysseus, who knows that the dream is true in its import. The oneiric image is violent: an eagle that represents Odysseus vanquishes geese that clearly reference the suitors.²³ Penelope is skeptical about the veracity of dreams, knowing as she does the lore of the Gates and the problem of true *versus* false visions (19.559–569):

τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε περίφρων Πηνελόπεια·
 560 'ξεῖν', ἣ τοι μὲν ὄνειροι ἀμήχανοι ἀκριτόμυθοι
 γίγνοντ', οὐδέ τι πάντα τελεῖται ἀνθρώποισι.
 δοῖαί γάρ τε πύλαι ἀμνηνῶν εἰσὶν ὀνείρων·
 αἱ μὲν γὰρ κεράεσσι τετεύχεται, αἱ δ' ἐλέφαντι
 τῶν οἱ μὲν κ' ἔλθωσι διὰ πριστοῦ ἐλέφαντος,
 565 οἱ ῥ' ἐλεφαίρονται, ἔπε' ἀκράαντα φέροντες·
 οἱ δὲ διὰ ξεστῶν κεράων ἔλθωσι θύραζε,
 οἱ ῥ' ἔτυμα κραίνουσι, βροτῶν ὅτε κέν τις ἴδῃται.

¹⁸ All quotes from Virgil's *Aeneid* are taken from G.B. Conte, ed., *Publius Vergilius Maro: Aeneis* [Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2019] (*editio altera*).

¹⁹ For commentary on these passages note especially N.M. Horsfall, ed., *Virgil, Aeneid 7* [Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill 2000], *ad loc.*; still useful is C.J. Fordyce, ed., *Virgil, Aeneid VII–VIII* [Oxford 1977].

²⁰ Cf. Turnus' complaint at 9.136–139, with the notes of J. Dingel, ed., *Kommentar zum 9. Buch der Aeneis Vergils* [Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter 1997], and P. Hardie, ed., *Virgil: Aeneid IX* [Cambridge 1994].

²¹ Cf. Cadau 2015, pp. 196–197; also R.K. Gibson, "Aeneas as *hospes* in Vergil, *Aeneid* 1 and 4", *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 1 [1999] 184–202.

²² The affair with Dido is a proximate cause of the queen's curse on Aeneas and his descendants (cf. 4.584–629).

²³ The Trojan War was instigated by Paris' abduction of Menelaus' legal wife; the battle in Ithaca with which the *Odyssey* reaches its climax was occasioned by the attempted appropriation of Odysseus' wife by the suitors.

ἀλλ' ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν οἶομαι αἰνὸν ὄνειρον
ἐλθέμεν ἢ κ' ἀσπαστὸν ἐμοὶ καὶ παιδὶ γένοιτο.²⁴

The dream is from the Gate of Horn; Odysseus is already in Ithaca, disguised and planning his epiphany. Penelope suspects that her dream is not true, and that any indication that Odysseus is soon to return to her is a vision that emitted from the Ivory Gate.²⁵ In Homer, the reference to the Gates comes in an oneiric context (as in Moschus): Penelope had actually been dreaming. In Virgil, the Gates figure as a feature of the mechanisms and topography of the underworld. In Colluthus (as in Moschus), they serve as a picturesque reference to the time of day, with the dawn goddess opening the Gates just as Helen and Paris make their exit from Sparta *en route* to Troy. In Homer the Gates figure in a passage redolent with the spirit of the faithfulness of Penelope to Odysseus; that marital devotion will be rewarded, even if the long span of years has induced Penelope to conclude that her dream is false and not true. The Gates were a Homeric, Odyssean borrowing for the imperial poets; appropriately, Virgil utilizes the striking image just as his own *Odyssey* draws to a close at the end of *Aeneid* 6.

Virgil had both archaic and Hellenistic antecedents. Moschus appropriated a Homeric dream image associated with faithfulness and marital concord for a diverse purpose, namely the abduction of Europa by Zeus. Odysseus returned from Asia to Europe to his devoted spouse Penelope; Zeus was merely exploiting one of his innumerable amours in taking Europa to Asia as he assumed taurine form by way of disguise. From Homer and Moschus we come to Virgil, where the Gates of Sleep provide transit to an Asian, Trojan hero as he prepares to move from the Odyssean realm to the Iliadic, on the cusp of his war in Italy and his conquest of Lavinia, the princess who is destined to be his new bride – notwithstanding the fact that Turnus and others in Italy consider Lavinia to be *his* betrothed, and Aeneas to be a new Paris.²⁶ The ghost of Helen, one could argue, looms large.²⁷ We

24 Passages from the *Odyssey* are cited from M.L. West, ed., *Homerus: Odyssea* (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum) [Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2017].

25 See further here R.B. Rutherford, ed., *Homer: Odyssey Books XIX and XX* [Cambridge 1992], *ad loc.*

26 Useful here is D.C. Woodworth, "Lavinia: An Interpretation", *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 61 [1930] 175–194; cf. L. Fratantuono, "Laviniaque venit litora: Blushes, Bees, and Virgil's Lavinia", *Maia* 60.1 [2008] 40–50; also C. Formicula, "Dark Visibility: Lavinia in the *Aeneid*", *Vergilius*, Vol. 52 [2006] 76–95; R.O.A.M. Lyne, "Lavinia's Blush (*Aeneid* 12.64–70)", *Greece & Rome*, Vol. 30, No. 1 [Apr., 1983] 55–64.

27 Cf. J.B. Garstang, "The Crime of Helen and the Concept of *Fatum* in the *Aeneid*", *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 8 [May, 1962] 337–345. The principal problem related to Helen in the *Aeneid* is the problematic passage 2.567–603, the authenticity of which is (like the Ivory Gate) one of the enduring cruxes of Virgilian scholarship. Aeneas may be considered a neo-Paris by his enemies in Latium, but there is no new Helen *per se* – it is the memory of Trojan Paris' abduction of Greek Helen that is remembered, with negative consequence for the perception of Aeneas by Turnus *et al.* (Lavinia is so strikingly different from any of the depictions of Helen in pre-Virgilian literature that any structural parallel for the character is noteworthy for its very contrast). For the idea that Dido substi-

may note too that Lavinia is referenced obliquely and allusively even in the opening of Virgil's epic, at *Aeneid* 1.2–3 where we learn of the enjambed “Lavinian shores” (*Laviniaque / litora*) where Aeneas arrived: a geographical marker that highlights the travel of the hero from Troy to Italy (1.1–2 *Troiae / Italiae*).²⁸ The silent, blushing Lavinia of the *Aeneid* may present a dramatically different picture from the Helen of the poetic traditions – but from the vantage point of an Amata or a Turnus, Aeneas is still Paris.

Near the close of Book 2 of Virgil's epic, Aeneas loses his wife Creüsa in the fall of Troy.²⁹ At the end of Book 4, his lover Dido takes her own life amid imagery that looks both back to the destruction of Troy, and forward to the historical reality of the Roman vanquishing of Carthage.³⁰ Two of the three even-numbered books of the poet's *Odyssey* thus feature the deaths of significant women in Aeneas' love as they draw to an end. At the close of Book 6 – the last in the sequence of these “even” books of the Odyssean *Aeneid* – we find the hero and the Sibyl sent forth by the shade of Anchises (whose death came at the end of Book 3)³¹ through the Gates of Sleep, an image that as we have seen harks back to Homer and the question of Odysseus' return to Penelope, and to Moschus and the contest of Europe and Asia for the hand of Europa. There are connections here to Virgil's themes: Aeneas has no wife as he arrives in Italy, but this Trojan, Asian exile is destined to marry the Latin, European Lavinia, a union that has the sanction of Jupiter.³² Aeneas is modeled on Odysseus for much of the first half of the *Aeneid*, not least in his harrowing of the underworld. He will come from Asia to Europe

tutes for Helen at least in some regards – a difficult thesis to argue that is not germane to our study – see M. Suzuki, “Virgil's *Aeneid*”, in her *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic* [Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1989] 92–149. On Virgil's Helen episode see T. Berres, *T. Vergil und die Helenaszene ...* [Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992]; also N.M. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 2* [Leiden/Boston: Brill 2008], and S. Casali, *Virgilio, Eneide 2: Introduzione, traduzione, e commento* [Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore 2017], *ad loc.*; more generally cf. L. Fratantuono and J. Braff, “*Communis Erinys*: The Image of Helen in the Latin Poets”, *L'antiquité classique* LXXXI [2012] 43–60.

²⁸ On this point we may note especially the work of S. Ridd, *Communication, Love, and Death in Homer and Virgil* [Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press 2017].

²⁹ *Aeneid* 2.735 ff., on which see Horsfall, *loc. cit.* [n. 27], and Casali, *loc. cit.* [n. 27], *ad loc.*; note also L. Grillo, “Leaving Troy and Creusa: Reflections on Aeneas' Flight”, *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 106, No. 1 [October–November 2010] 43–68.

³⁰ Cf. *Aeneid* 4.642 ff., with the annotations *ad loc.* of C. Buscaroli, *Il libro di Didone: Testo con traduzione a fronte seguito da ampio commento interpretativo ed estetico* [Milano/Genova/Roma/Napoli: Società Anonima Editrice Dante Alighieri 1932], and A.S. Pease, *P. Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus* [Cambridge/Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1935].

³¹ Anchises is lost at the end of Book 3, and the helmsman Palinurus at the close of Book 5: in reverse order, these are the first and last shades Aeneas encounters in the underworld, and their deaths alternate with those of Creüsa and Dido as the pattern of loss that colors the close of Books 2–5 unfolds.

³² A recurring theme in Virgil's epic is the fate of Aeneas and the supreme god's willing embrace of this destiny.

and marry a local girl. As he prepares to embark on his Italian adventures, however, Aeneas will be compared not to the Ithacan hero who returned to Penelope, but to the Trojan prince who came from Asia to abduct a Greek, European girl: he will be an *alter Paris*.³³ Virgil's Aeneas takes leave of the Odyssean half of the *Aeneid*, as it were, through the Gates of Sleep via which Penelope's dream about her husband had been sent forth. But Aeneas is not Odysseus now returned to Ithaca. On the contrary, soon enough he will be condemned as if he were Paris by key figures in his destined new home of Latium.

We may turn to Colluthus' third epic predecessor. Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* has the distinction of being the longest surviving epic from classical antiquity at a massive forty-eight books, and it no surprise that there is room for intertextual allusions to numerous famous passages from previous epics. As in Homer, so in Nonnus mention of the Gates of Sleep comes in the context of a lover's dream.³⁴ The setting and circumstances, however, are markedly different from those of the *Odyssey*: the familiar themes of love and deceit are considered in a scene far removed from Homer's. The Indian hero Morrheus has been beguiled by Eros at the behest of Aphrodite; he is madly infatuated with the Bacchant Chalcomede. His obsession is not remotely reciprocated. The vision of a dream beguiles him, coming as it does from the Ivory Gate (34.89–91):

Μορρέα δ' ὑπνώνοντα παρήπαφεν ὄψις ὀνείρου,
κλειψινόων ἐλέφαντος ἀναΐξασα πυλάων,
καί τινα μῦθον ἔειπεν ἐπήρατον ἡπεροπῆα.³⁵

The dream apparition announces (34.92 ff.) that Chalcomede is a willing lover, and that marriage has charm even in sleep (96). The vision observes that dawn is near, and that Chalcomede desires to hold Morrheus in her arms (98). Morrheus wakes up from his slumber and saw the beginning of dawn, which Nonnus memorably labels the thief of love (100) – Eos, after all, is said to have resented her own challenging amatory situation, and to seek to rise early to avoid the embarrassment of Tithonus.³⁶ Morrheus is deluded by the false dream; he addresses the dawn and credits her with a threefold light: Chalcomede; the daylight; the expulsion of night (103–104). He wishes that Chalcomede would appear, rosier than the dawn goddess (105–106). In the ensuing, complicated battle narrative of Books 34–35, Morrheus will meet his doom because of the deceptive dream of the Bacchant.

³³ So, *inter al.*, concludes J. Watkins in his *After Lavinia: A Literary History of Premodern Marriage Diplomacy* [Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press 2017].

³⁴ There is a more passing reference to the lore of the Gates at *Dionysiaca* 44.46 ff., Pentheus' mother Agave is depicted as spending a sleepless night in terror, before she recalls a dream that had come via the Gate of Horn as a harbinger of the all too true doom of her son Pentheus.

³⁵ Nonnus is cited from B. Gerlaud, ed., *Nonnos de Panopolis: Les Dionysiaques, Tome XI: Chants XXXIII–XXXIV* [Paris: Les Belles Lettres 2005].

³⁶ Cf. Ovid, *Amores* c. 1.13.

In Nonnus, then, the Gates of Sleep are once again connected with matters amatory and erotic. As in Homer, Moschus, and later Colluthus, the Gates are associated with love. Only in Homer is the love unquestionably honorable in the sense of Odysseus and Penelope as exemplars (at least ultimately in the former case) of nuptial fidelity. There is deception in the *Odyssey* Gates scene, but it comes as Odysseus indulges in his masquerade and disguise to test the trustworthiness of his household and people, not out of any hostility toward Penelope or in a context in which union with his wife will be inappropriate (as with Paris and Helen). For Nonnus, once again love is closely associated with deception, and the dream image of Chalcomede spells doom for Morrheus (as Paris' abduction of Helen will bring ruin to Troy). Erotic dreams from the Ivory Gate are vain; Penelope's dream came clearly through horn, and it reflected a positive, wholesome amatory bond.

Virgil, it would seem, is the outlier. There would seem to be no erotic associations for the Gates of Sleep that close Book 6. Aeneas exits the Gates with a woman, but she is the virgin prophetess of Apollo, the Cumaean Sibyl. We are far removed from the world of *amour*, and we might think that we are distant too from the realm of deceit and lies – were we not puzzled by the problem of the Ivory Gate and its implicit association with falsehood. And yet we may trace certain themes and identify some intertextual clues that help to explain any seeming anomalies. The first half of the *Aeneid* is an *Odyssey*, and before Virgil the Gates figured in the homecoming of Odysseus to Penelope. Aeneas has enjoyed something of a homecoming as he arrives in Italy, the destined home of the future Rome and the exiles from Troy. The problem is that unlike Odysseus, Aeneas has no wife already in Italy: his spouse Creüsa died on the night Troy fell, and like Odysseus he has enjoyed a dalliance – Punic Dido spelling rather more baleful consequences for the Trojan than Calypso or Circe did for the Ithacan.³⁷ For Aeneas, there will be a new wife in Lavinia – potential Rutulian suitors notwithstanding. But Lavinia's mother and would-be lover in Italy will associate Aeneas explicitly with his fellow Trojan Paris: this is a repeated theme of the book that commences just after Aeneas exits Avernus via the Ivory Gate. One may argue as to whether or not the comparison is a fair and just one, but it is a centerpiece of the attacks leveled against Aeneas by Amata and Turnus in *Aeneid* 7.³⁸

Virgil also has the intertextual predecessor of Moschus and his Gates of Sleep, a Hellenistic passage redolent with the air of the storied passage of the Hellespont and the meeting of Asia and Europe. Moschus' Europa is abducted to Asia, in re-

³⁷ Not long after the mention of the Gates – near the start of *Aeneid* 7 (15–24) – Aeneas and his skirt the realm of Circe, but they are saved from any encounter with the sorceress by the timely intervention of Neptune. The divine action serves to prevent an encounter between Aeneas and Circe, which does serve to remind the audience that Aeneas is, after all, not Odysseus – just as Virgil also orchestrated the departure of Aeneas from Avernus in a manner quite different from that found in Homer for Odysseus.

³⁸ Indeed for how Aeneas as the new Paris will desert Amata see Horsfall, *loc. cit.* [n. 19] *ad* 361.

verse of the progress of Aeneas to Europe from Troy – but exactly in accord with Paris' departure with Helen. Moschus' dream vision even goes so far as to present an allegorized competition between the continents for the possession of Europa. Virgil thus had two different Greek intertexts at his disposal that referenced the Gates, different and yet linked by erotic content: Odysseus' homecoming to Penelope, and Zeus' abduction of Europa and the image of conflict between the great land masses. In subsequent epics, Nonnus connected the Gates unquestionably to the matter of erotic deception with his ill-fated Morrheus and mendacious Chalcomedes. And then for Colluthus, the Gates are referenced in connection to one of the most celebrated erotic escapades in ancient lore: the abduction of an all too willing Helen by Paris.³⁹

In Colluthus the departure of the ill-fated couple Paris and Helen is from the dwelling of Menelaus who delights in guests (325 φιλοξείνου Μενελάου); the adjective highlights the treachery of Paris as the Spartan guest-friend, and of Helen as the Laconian bride. In appropriating imagery from Virgil's depiction of the exit of Aeneas from the underworld, Colluthus offers something of a commentary on his poetic predecessor's mysterious image. The second half of the *Aeneid* will chronicle a repetition of epic history, as Aeneas becomes the new Paris. In an important sense, Colluthus represents the crown and synthesis of the previous epic descriptions of the mysterious Gates of Sleep. There will be a new war that is reminiscent of the great struggle at Troy, and Aeneas and Turnus (*inter al.*) will assume varying Homeric mantles as history repeats in Latium.⁴⁰

To recapitulate: Virgil certainly had at his poetic disposal Homer's archaic dream of Penelope about the return of Odysseus, and Moschus' Hellenistic dream of Europe and Asia in strife over a girl. Both of these passages fit the context of the bridge between *Aeneid* 6 and 7, as Aeneas – the new Odysseus – arrives at his fated home in Italy as an Asian transplant to Europe, and as his arrival in Latium almost immediately leads to war over a girl. In Homer the dream of Penelope was a true one, though Odysseus' wife was concerned that it was a false image from

39 For Colluthus as "mixer" of Homer and Nonnus cf. Cadau, *loc. cit.* [n. 1] 259.

40 The Sibyl offers a hint of this at *Aeneid* 6.89 ... *alius Latio iam partus Achilles*, where the birth of a new Achilles in Latium is announced as part of a grim prediction to the Trojan hero of how another war must soon be fought. The reference to an *alius Achilles* points to Turnus, though by the close of Book 12 it will be Aeneas who is in something of the position of Achilles with the defeated Hector. It is possible to construe a Virgilian reading of Homer in which Aeneas is first something of a failed Odysseus, and then a failed Achilles: the epic closes with the Achilles of *Iliad* 22, absent the redemption of the hero from Book 24. See further K.C. King, "Foil and Fusion: Homer's Achilles in Vergil's *Aeneid*", *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* No. 9 [1982] 31–57; for something of a different view, cf. T. van Nortwick, "Aeneas, Turnus, and Achilles", *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 110 [1980] 303–314. One of the trademarks of Virgil's engagement with Homer is the shifting nature of his heroic epic comparands; while someone like the Arcadian Pallas is always reminiscent of Patroclus, other figures (Aeneas, Turnus, even the Volscian heroine Camilla) evoke now one, now another Homeric parallel. This is especially true for Aeneas, whose presence dominates both halves of the poem, in which we move from a new *Odyssey* to a new *Iliad*.

the Ivory Gate. In Virgil Aeneas is sent out of the underworld via the Ivory Gate in part because he is not, after all, like the Homeric Odysseus of Penelope's true dream: he is not returning to a home in which he had ever actually lived, and most certainly he is not returning to a dear spouse of many years. Rather, like the equally true dream in Moschus, there will be strife between Troy and Italy, between Asia and Europe. That strife will be occasioned – as in Moschus – because of the abduction of a girl, in Moschus one taken by Zeus, while in Virgil Jupiter sanctions the union of Aeneas and Lavinia.

The deceit in Homer is, as we have seen, rather innocent: Odysseus is in disguise, and soon enough he will reveal himself to his devoted wife. In Moschus Zeus will be disguised as a bull to trick Europa. In Nonnus Chalcionede will be the deceiver, as Morrheus is ruined by his erotic infatuation for the Bacchant. And in Colluthus, Helen will depart of her own free will with Paris from her husband and home, even as her false dream apparition will tell a different story of blame and responsibility to the forlorn Hermione.

Aeneas is not guilty of mendacity or falsehood in *Aeneid* 6 or 7, save in the biased judgment of his enemies.⁴¹ As aforementioned, he may be considered a “false” Odysseus in comparison to the hero of Penelope's dream in *Odyssey* 19. But he cannot be identified fairly as a liar or deceiver in his actions. This is, however, not the view of his antagonists Amata and Turnus, for whom he is like Paris with Helen, a brigand and rogue who has come to Europe to abscond with someone else's beloved.⁴² While not guilty of deceit, Aeneas is also not the Homeric Odysseus of Penelope's dream, but a player – however unwillingly – in renewed conflict between Asia and Europe like that painted vividly by Moschus. In Homer the Gates are associated with implicit conflict: the Odysseus-eagle will, after all, slay the suitor-geese. In Moschus there is the imagined argument of the continents. In Nonnus there is the context of the Indian war. In Colluthus there is the imminent outbreak of the Trojan War. And in Virgil, there will be the rebirth of the world of the *Iliad*, the new war that will erupt in Italy – once again, on account of a girl.

And so Aeneas departs the underworld and enters Italy via the Ivory Gate, as he quite unintentionally assumes the mantle and label – however unjust – of the *alter Paris*. And so Aeneas will not exit from the lower regions in the manner of his epic predecessor Odysseus (*Odyssey* 11.528–540), but via the gate employed by false dreams.⁴³ The Virgilian Ivory Gate is a direct response to the Odyssean con-

⁴¹ His behavior in Books 6–7 may be thought to be markedly at variance with his actions with Dido in Book 4; for a comprehensive look at the poet's stage setting for an evaluation of Aeneas' behavior with the queen, see especially K.P. Bednarowski, “Dido and the Motif of Deception in *Aeneid* 2 and 3”, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* Vol. 145, No. 1 [Spring, 2015] 135–172.

⁴² One may note *en passant* that Colluthus' Helen is depicted in a markedly darker light than Paris in terms of the question of mendacity in the closing movements of the epyllion.

⁴³ As we have observed, one could argue mechanically that if a hero needed to transit the Gates of Sleep, he would need to access the Ivory Gate since he is not a true shade. But Virgil easily could have mirrored Aeneas' departure on the similar situation of Homer's Odysseus, in whole or in part.

text of the Homeric Gates of Sleep, and to the Gates referenced at the very start of Moschus' *Europa*. Virgil's passage blends elements of his archaic and Hellenistic antecedents into a cohesive whole that offers implicit comment both forward and back in his epic. It would be for the poet Colluthus to write the commentary and footnote on Virgil's interplay with his two predecessors, as he evokes the complaint of Amata and Turnus against Aeneas, the new Paris whose actions – however unintentionally in comparison to his much maligned fellow Trojan – will lead to another costly war.⁴⁴ The Virgilian Gates at the end of *Aeneid* 6 blend elements of similar passages in Homer and Moschus, with implications that are explored more fully in *Aeneid* 7. Centuries after the Augustan Age, Colluthus would combine elements from Homer, Moschus, and Virgil in referencing the storied Gates at the crucial moment when Paris and Helen depart from Sparta. This reading of the significance of Virgil's Gate takes us away from the common critical debate regarding Virgil's response to the nascent Augustan regime, but it immerses us deeply in the poet's intertextual, ludic response to archaic and Alexandrian Greek verse.

Scholars have offered explanations of considerable ingenuity, cleverness, and sophistication for the perceived problem posed by the Virgilian Gates, in the hope of explicating exactly why Aeneas is sent through the ivory exit reserved for false dreams. But a solution to the puzzle of the portal may well be found in the intertexts of Homer and Moschus, and the best commentator on the Virgilian *Somni portae* may prove to be Colluthus in the closing movements of his epyllion on the abduction of Helen.

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His employment of a different image from the *Odyssey* – the Gates that have nothing to do in Homer with Odysseus' time in the underworld – serves as a brilliant device of the poet to confirm how Aeneas is not Odysseus, and in fact soon enough will be welcomed in Italy not as an Odysseus but as a neo-Paris.

⁴⁴ Nonnus' debt to his three poetic predecessors (Homer, Moschus, Virgil) is noteworthy too: for him the Gates are associated with eroticism and deceit. The Gates in Nonnus figure in the context of the war of Bacchus and his minions with the Indians (we may compare *Aeneid* 7.385 ff., where Amata is compared to a Bacchant as she absconds with Lavinia to conceal her from Aeneas; on Bacchic imagery in the book see especially L. Boccilini Palagi, *La trottola di Dioniso: motivi dionisiaci nel VII libro dell'Eneide* [Bologna: Pàtron Editore 2007]). Colluthus, however, was working with a mythological theme that was obviously connected closely to Virgilian intertexts. There is nothing discordant with Nonnus in Colluthus' Gates passage – the themes of eroticism and deception more than amply link the passages in the two authors.