

## MISZELLEN

### THE DREAMING MISER IN CLAUDIAN, DE SEXTO CONSULATU HONORII, PREF. 8

Claudian opens his preface to the panegyric on Honorius' sixth consulate with the commonplace that in sleep people continue to concern themselves with their daytime pursuits:

*omnia, quae sensu uoluuntur uota diurno  
pectore sopito reddit amica quies.  
uenator defessa toro cum membra reponit,  
mens tamen ad siluas et sua lustra redit.* 5  
*iudicibus lites, aurigae somnia currus  
uanaque nocturnis meta cauetur equis.  
furto gaudet amans, permutat nauita merces  
et uigil elapsas quaerit auarus opes,  
blandaque largitur frustra sitientibus aegris  
inriuguus gelido pocula fonte sopor.* 10

The word *uigil* applied in line 8 to the miser's nocturnal preoccupation with wealth has given rise to much discussion. One traditional interpretation<sup>2</sup> is that the miser is so obsessed by concern for his money that he cannot sleep at all – which of course would not fit the catalogue of sleepers dreaming of their waking concerns. To remove this anomaly Gesner and Bücheler neatly conjectured *uigili*,<sup>3</sup> which M. J. Dewar, in his recent commentary on the poem (Oxford 1996, 53–4) concedes “would yield tolerably good sense: the miser would then be seeking to recover in his dreams some treasure he has lost in his waking existence”. He objects though that “this require[s] the reader to supply the elements of a ‘plot’ that explains *elapsas*”<sup>4</sup>. His own solution is to take *uigil* “as equivalent to *euigilans*: the miser has enjoyed a luxurious dream of possession, but is linguistically jolted awake to find his dream-treasure slip from his grasp”;<sup>5</sup> this opaque comment is elucidated by his translation, “and, on waking, the miser seeks in vain the riches that have slipped from his grasp”. To this interpretation one must object that it too breaks twice over the sequence of people who continue in their dreams to be engaged in precisely the

1) Text and punctuation of J. B. Hall's 1985 Teubner text.

2) Found for example in the Valpy version (Reading 1821) of the Dauphin edition: “cui auaritia non concedit quietem suam”.

3) Bücheler in fact proposed *uigili lapsas*, removing the ugly elision which Gesner's conjecture introduces; on the rarity of elision in C., see C. Gruzelier, Claudian, de raptu Proserpinae (Oxford 1993) xxviii–xxix. But *elapsas* is far more pointed than *lapsas*.

4) To describe this situation as a ‘plot’ seems excessive, and may rest on a misunderstanding of the participle *elapsas*; the miser's concern is to grasp at wealth which in the natural way of things flows away.

5) This interpretation was anticipated by N. L. Artaud, in his Paris edition of 1824, though Artaud hankers after *uigili*.

same activities to which they devote their waking hours: it would describe the miser's reaction after waking rather than his preoccupations while sleeping, and would introduce a contrast instead of an identity between the miser's waking and dreaming states.

As an alternative to this somewhat forced and tortuous reading, Dewar reports an ingenious suggestion by Professor Nisbet that "the miser is perhaps, in a neat paradox, to be imagined as 'dreaming of being vigilant' ". This is I fear too ingenious and too paradoxical. It is essential in any commonplace to exclude the unexpected; here any surprising ingredient would steal attention from the real paradox which the commonplace introduces, here a showy coup de théâtre: Claudian, the author of a dream *Gigantomachia* which he recites to a dream audience of gods and their retinue, wakes to find himself at the imperial court, about to eulogize in epic verse Honorius' victories over the Gothic invaders.

A simpler solution lies to hand: neither the form nor the normal meaning of *uigil* need excite suspicion if we make the minimal change of *et* to *ut*, thus restoring sense and narrative sequence:<sup>6</sup> *ut uigil elapsas quaerit auarus opes* 'Just as when awake, the miser [in his dreams] seeks the riches which elude him.'<sup>7</sup> In each of the preceding couplets, and in the two which follow, there is a verbal reminder of the continuity of sleeping and waking preoccupations,<sup>8</sup> and *ut uigil*, which would apply ἀπὸ κοινοῦ to the lover and the sailor as well as the miser,<sup>9</sup> maintains this pattern; the repetition of the point may seem a trifle heavy-handed on the printed page, but its point in a piece ostensibly intended for public performance is to reinforce the commonplace and thereby emphasize the surprise which follows.

Belfast

Frederick Williams

6) *Et* is in any case obtrusive in a hitherto asyndetic list.

7) *elapsas*, as the participle of a deponent verb, may of course "express an action, or state, contemporaneous with the time of the finite verb" (E. C. Woodcock, *A New Latin Syntax* [London 1959] 81, §103; K.-S. I 759 f.). The diction recalls the sufferings of Tantalus (cf. Ovid, *Am.* 2.2.43–4 *quaerit aquas in aquis et poma fugacia captat / Tantalus*, *Ibis* 179–80 *poma pater Pelopis praesentia quaerit et idem / semper eget liquidis semper abundat aquis*, *Her.* 16.212 *in mediis quaerit ut uir umor aquis*), and indeed Tantalus' condition is often equated with that of the miser, e. g. Horace, *Serm.* 1.1.68–9, Ovid, *Am.* 3.7.49–52. Wealth is of course often thought of in liquid terms: see W. Headlam-A. D. Knox (*Herodas. The Mimes and Fragments* [Cambridge 1922]) on *Herodas* 4.14, E. Livrea (*Studi Cercidei* [Bonn 1986] 13, 24 f.) on *Cercidas* fr. 1.4. This eases the transition to the next couplet, describing sick people dreaming of slaking their thirst.

8) *defessa toro dum membra reponit* 3, *somnia* 5, *uana, nocturnis* 6, *sopor* 10, *sub nocte silenti* 11. Contrast the list of examples in the comparable passage of Lucretius 4.962 ff., though there the conceit is introduced by no fewer than four lines stressing the parallel between waking and sleeping concerns.

9) The exigencies of modern punctuation might tempt an editor to attach the phrase either to *nauita* or to *auarus*, but should be resisted.

---

ISSN 0035-449 X

Schriftleiter: Priv.-Doz. Dr. Stephan Schröder, Institut für Altertumskunde  
der Universität zu Köln, D-50923 Köln

Druckerei: Laupp & Göbel, Nehren

Verlag: J. D. Sauerländer, Frankfurt am Main

Manuskripte werden an die Adresse von Prof. Dr. Bernd Manuwald, Institut für  
Altertumskunde der Universität zu Köln, D-50923 Köln, erbeten.

Printed in Germany · © J. D. Sauerländer's Verlag, Frankfurt a. M. 2000