

# Dreamscapes

## Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (54–51 BCE)

- ▶ Concluding fragment from his political treatise *De re publica*
- ▶ A dream-vision predicting military and political successes
- ▶ Alleges that the souls of the just inhabit the Milky Way



Figure: Heavens Above Her (detail; CC-BY-SA Ian Norman)

## Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (54–51 BCE)

- ▶ Aristotelian cosmos
  - ▶ geocentric
  - ▶ spherical
  - ▶ nesting
- ▶ Aristotelian climate zones
- ▶ Pythagorean harmony of the spheres
- ▶ Virtuous human souls live in the Milky Way

## Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (54–51 BCE)

“ Follow justice and natural affection, which though great in the case of parents and kinsfolk, is greatest of all in relation to our fatherland. Such is the life that leads to heaven and to this company of those who have now lived their lives and released from their bodies dwell in [...] the Milky Way.

(trans. Pearman, *Somnium Scipionis*, §8) ”

## Macrobius's *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (early s. v)

- ▶ Classification of dreams and visions
- ▶ Theology
- ▶ Cosmology
- ▶ Neoplatonic character

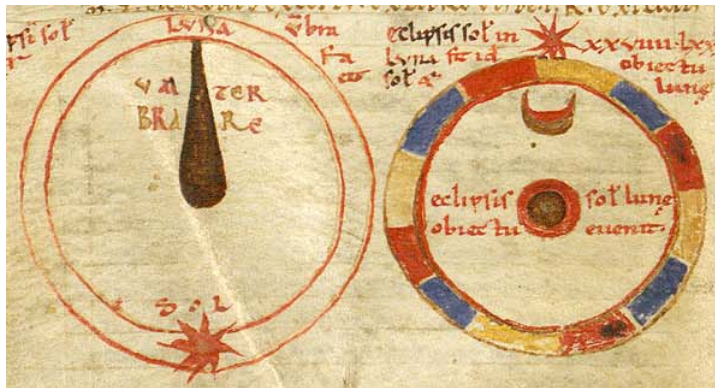


Figure: Eclipses; Copenhagen, NKS 218 4<sup>o</sup>, fol. 49v (c. 1150, detail; public domain / WMC)

## Some Late Antique and Medieval Dreams and Visions

- ▶ *Vision of St Paul* (s. II)
- ▶ Vision of Cædmon (Bede, Anglo-Latin, c. 731)
- ▶ Vision of Drythelm (Bede, Anglo-Latin, c. 731)
- ▶ *Vision of Tundalus* (Hiberno-Latin, s. XII)
- ▶ *Sir Orfeo* (Middle English, c. 1300)
- ▶ *Piers Plowman* (Middle English, 1370s)
- ▶ *The Book of the Duchess* (Chaucer, Middle English, c. 1370)
- ▶ *The House of Fame* (Chaucer, Middle English, c. 1380)
- ▶ *The Legend of Good Women* (Chaucer, Middle English, c. 1390)

## Some Antique and Medieval Debates

- ▶ Debate between winter and spring (Greek, attr. to Aesop, s. 6 BCE)
- ▶ Singing contests in Virgil's *Eclogues* (Latin, c. 40 BCE)
- ▶ *Conflictus veris et hiemis* (Latin, attr. to Alcuin, c. 800)
- ▶ *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Middle English, c. 1200)
- ▶ *Wynnere and Wastoure* (dream, Middle English, c. 1350)
- ▶ *The Parlement of the thre Ages* (dream, Middle English, 1352x1390)
- ▶ *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (dream, Middle English, late s. textscxiv)
- ▶ *The Destruction of Troy* (dream, Middle English, late s. textscxiv)
- ▶ *The Parliament of Fowls* (Chaucer, dream, Middle English, c. 1382)
- ▶ *Death and Liffe* (dream, Middle English, c. 1400)

## *The Owl and the Nightingale*

“

- 1 Ich was in one sumere dale,  
In one suþe dizele hale;  
Iherde ich holde grete tale  
4 An hule and one niztingale.

”



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# Common Elements of Middle English Dream Visions

- ▶ Solitary
- ▶ Lush natural environment in spring or summer
- ▶ Brookside rest
- ▶ Auditory triggers
  - ▶ Birdsong
  - ▶ The sound of running water

# The Structure of *The Parliament of Fowls*

1. The dreamer
  - a. Love
  - b. *The Dream of Scipio*
2. The dream
  - a. The Gates
  - b. The Garden of love
  - c. The temple of Venus
  - d. Nature
  - e. The birds
  - f. The debate
  - g. A roundel in praise of summer
3. The dreamer's conclusion

## Dante: The Gates of Hell

“

Through me you pass into the city of woe:

Through me you pass into eternal pain:

3 Through me among the people lost for aye.

Justice the founder of my fabric moved:

To rear me was the task of Power divine,

6 Supremest Wisdom, and primeval Love.

Before me things create were none, save things

Eternal, and eternal I endure.

9 All hope abandon, ye who enter here.

(trans. Cary, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, canto 3)

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## Bibliography I

Cary, Henry F., trans. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*. Harvard Classics 20. New York: Collier, 1909–1914.

Kruger, Steven F. “Dreaming.” In *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, edited by Corinne Saunders, 71–89. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Pearman, W. D., trans. *M. Tulli Ciceronis Somnium Scipionis: The Dream of Scipio Africanus Minor*. Cambridge: Deighton / Bell, 1883.



P. S. Langeslag