The Middle Ages inherited the tradition of oneiromancy from the authors of Antiquity and with it systems of classification to differentiate between varieties of dream and their significance. At the simplest and yet most perplexing level, the classification was bipartite: dreams could be true or false, from an internal or an external source, transcendent or mundane. The bisection of dreams along these lines leads to tensions which haunt medieval dream theory, popular dreambooks, literary dreams, and canon law. Complicating the basic bipartite division of dreams, Macrobius’s *In Somnium Scipionis* describes a range of dreams which bridge the gap opened by the dualistic framework.

Macrobius proposes a schema which is essentially the same as that of Artemidor of Ephesa, a second-century oneirocritic (Braet, *Le songe dans la chanson de geste*, p. 17). He classifies five different forms of dreams in an order which reflects increasing significance (Braet, *Le songe dans la chanson de geste*, p. 17). He classifies five different forms of dreams in an order which reflects increasing significance (Braet, *Le songe dans la chanson de geste*, p. 17).

1 See Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, pp. 1-20, for a discussion of the tensions created by the “doubleness” of dreams and of the ambivalence of attitude to dream experience in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

2 Here I discuss only Macrobius’s classification of dreams. However, Calcidius, in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, classifies dreams according to a similar scheme. See Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, pp. 24-32.

3 It appears that Artemidorus and Macrobius shared a source (Kruger, *Dreaming*, p. 20).
songe, p. 19). The least significant dream is the insomnium which results from physical or psychic causes, such as eating and drinking, or a stressful day. The visum is a sort of nightmare in which fantastic figures appear to the dreamer. While Macrobius views the insomnium and the visum as insignificant, he understands the last three categories of dream to be charged with meaning. The first of these is the oraculum through which the dreamer receives an order or a prediction from an important person or from God himself. The visio reveals future events as they are to occur. The somnium, the last dream type in Macrobius’s classification, is regarded as the most significant. It is a symbolic representation of the future which always requires interpretation. Macrobius defines the somnium in the following terms:

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4 For an overview of Macrobius’s classification, see also Kruger, Dreaming, pp. 21-23. Kruger gives a diagram of Macrobius’s dream categories which lists in order of descending value on a scale measuring higher/lower: oraculum, visio, somnium, visum, insomnium. Clearly, this diagram reflects the median position of the somnium between the categories of true and false dreams (since the somnium reveals a truth in fictive forms), but it can be misleading in terms of the relative importance of the somnium in Macrobius’s classification. In his exposition of these dream types, Macrobius lists the types of dream in the order given in my text above and privileges the somnium (In Somnium Scipionis, I.3). Kruger himself recognizes that “As dream interpreter, Macrobius concerned himself largely with elucidating the unclear truths of the somnium, examining how hidden meaning and the fiction in which it is dressed interact” (Dreaming, p. 35; Kruger’s emphasis).

5 In order to differentiate between the different kinds of dreams described by Macrobius, I retain his Latin terms, which are more suggestive than awkward paraphrases in English.
somnium proprium uocatur quod tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significacionem rei quae demonstratur. (I.3.106)

A somnium is properly so called because it covers with images and hides with enigmas the true meaning of the matter which is only to be understood by interpretation.7

This typology of dreams is reflected in the twelfth-century Occitan epic Girart de Roussillon. The five dreams of the poem appear in the order of Macrobius’s hierarchical system of classification. The first dream, which is attributed to an agency other than God (Elissen), falls into the category of false dreams represented by the insomnium and the visum. The second and third dreams, which function as a pair, belong to the category of visio since they show events as they will occur. The last two dreams of the poem are somnia, since they are obscure and require interpretation. It is significant that the somnium considered by Macrobius to be the most significant of all dream forms marks the climactic moment in the hagiographical section of the poem. These five dreams have different functions within the poem, and each demands a different level of interpretation on the part of the characters and of the reader.8

The first dream (laisse 544) can be differentiated from the others in that it is almost certainly the invention of Elissen. The Queen asks Charles to listen to her dream about Girart in which she thought she saw

6 The Latin text for Macrobius is taken from the Willis edition of Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis. See Works Cited.
7 My translation.
8 Micheline de Combarieu du Grès’s inventory of epic dreams in L’Idéal humain et l’expérience morale chez les héroïs des chansons de geste des origines à 1250 does not give an accurate account of the dreams in Girart de Roussillon: she lists only the last two dreams of the poem (p. 513).
Girart entering the king’s palace and swearing on the saints that as long as he lived he would not harm his king. In the dream, the king’s hall was hung with new silks and Girart was the powerful seneschal of the court.

The second and third dreams are related to each other, as are the fourth and the fifth. The second is received by one of Girart’s servants who dreams about great riches (l. 9026). Girart refuses to believe his servant until he himself has the same dream, whereupon he takes action and discovers a Roman treasure trove near Autun. The fourth and fifth dreams, which occur in the hagiographical section of the poem, are the most obscure. Before the miracle of Vézelay, Berthe dreams of a devil in the guise of a snake who tries to make her drink his venom as if it were a spicy drink. She is protected against the snake’s advances by the timely intervention of a divine power (ll. 9543-47). The counterpart of this dream is received by Girart as he is traveling to Vézelay to investigate rumors that his wife has committed adultery with a pilgrim. Berthe is, in fact, innocent of these charges brought against her by Ataïn after Berthe has refused his own sexual advances. Following the accusations, Girart dreams of Berthe under a pine tree wearing clothes as white as parchment and covered in more flowers than a hawthorn. She is holding a golden chalice from which she makes Girart drink of the holy wine which God created at the wedding of Cana (ll. 9710-16).

Before returning to a discussion of the five dreams of Girart de Roussillon and their position within a Macrobian classification, it is necessary to consider the reception and development in the Middle Ages of classical dream theory tempered by the patristic tradition. The classical bipartite classification of dreams into categories of true and false, represented in the Odyssey and the Aeneid by the metaphor of the twin doors of ivory and horn, is retained by Gregory the Great in the fourth book of his Dialogues (Braet, Le songe, pp. 21-22). He remolds it to fit the

9 “Sunt geminae Somni portae; quorum altera fertur / cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris, / altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto, / sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes” [“Two gates of Sleep there

Olifant
Christian tradition by attributing false dreams to the work of the Devil and true dreams to the agency of God.

Ecclesiastical authorities were torn between a desire to condemn dream interpretation as the vain, suspicious activity of pagan ancestors and the necessity of recognizing the importance of dreams as a means of communication between God and his favored ones in the Old Testament. John of Salisbury and Peter of Blois represent the tradition which condemned belief in any form of dream: “in uisionibus sperare superstitiosum est et saluti contrarium” [“to place one’s hopes in dreams is full of superstition and contrary to salvation”] (Peter of Blois, “Epistula LXV,” col. 194A; my translation).

In addition to the classical and the patristic traditions of beliefs about dreams, there was a third tradition, represented by popular opinion. During the Middle Ages there was a particular sensitivity to manifestations of the supernatural and a proclivity to attributing divine origins to them (Braet, *Le songe*, p. 36). Dreams were no exception to this interpretative activity, as Steven Kruger explains:

> The confinement of dreaming to a psychological or physiological realm is, of course, relatively recent. For most of its long history, the dream has been treated not merely as an internally-motivated phenomenon […], but as an experience strongly linked to the realm of divinity: dreams were often thought to foretell the future because they allowed the human soul access to a transcendent, spiritual reality (*Dreaming*, p. 2).

are, whereof the one, they say, is horn and offers a ready exit to true shades, the other shining with sheen of polished ivory, but delusive dreams issue upward through it from the world below”] (Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, trans. Fairclough, vol. 1, p. 597). See Goold’s note 57 on p. 597 of this edition regarding the gates of Sleep in Homer (*Odyssey* 19. 562-67).
The influence of monastic institutions on the faithful was instrumental in maintaining a predilection for interpreting the supernatural or inexplicable within a religious context. Marc Bloch draws attention to the fact that monks had become involved in dream interpretation: “Nul psychanalyste n’a jamais scruté les songes avec plus d’ardeur que les moines du Xe ou du XIe siècle” (La société féodale, vol. 1, p. 118). The dreams to which most importance was attached were those which required interpretation. The symbolism and obscurity of the imagery of the somnium attracted the attention of clerics schooled in interpretative skills. The exegete turned his critical faculties to dream scenarios and appropriated the role of oneirocritic.

Medieval dream theory was absorbed by the literature of the time. The poets of the chansons de geste are manifestly less skeptical about dreams than the Church Fathers. Braet draws attention to the fact that, although the poets of the chansons de geste were conversant with the anti-oneiromancy lobby, they were jealously protective of the credibility and status of dreams:

Certains poètes étaient avertis des artifices du Malin. D’autres ont pu tirer parti d’une ancienne théorie selon laquelle les chimères se produisent au début de la nuit et les songes vrais après minuit. Mais c’est seulement lorsque ces connaissances peuvent servir leur propos, qu’ils y font allusion. Si l’indication de temps renforce parfois la véridicité de certains présages, les poètes ne l’utilisent jamais dans le but opposé (Le songe, p. 198; my emphasis).

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10 On Arthurian literature see Jo Goyne, “Arthurian Dreams and Medieval Dream Theory.”
To the poets of the *chansons de geste*, dreams were a narrative device, used most frequently to anticipate action to be narrated later. The dream may contain information or commands. It may alert the dreamer to a danger which is threatening him or his close friends and family. Dreams may also indicate that divine favor rests with the dreamer who has privileged access to knowledge of the future. Charlemagne is the recipient of dreams of divine origins in the *Chanson de Roland*. He dreams that a boar bites his right arm and that a leopard comes towards him and fights the boar, biting off its right ear. This dream is preceded by one in which Charlemagne sees Ganelon seizing his spear from him and shattering it. Charlemagne’s actions are not influenced by his dreams. In spite of the danger of which the dreams appear to warn him, he allows Ganelon to nominate Roland to the rearguard. The dreamer may act on the information which he receives in his sleep or not. Through the agency of the dream, the poet marks out not only characters who are especially important but also events. An event which occurs after it has been forecast in a dream acquires particular resonance.

Through the agency of dreams, characters and events, separated by narrative space and/or geographical space, may be juxtaposed. Ultimately, the dream imposes a certain unity on the narrative. The dream forecasts the event which occurs and thus self-referentially confirms its own veracity. This narrative pattern may be augmented by dream interpretations which precede and/or follow the occurrence of the event.

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11 See the *Chanson de Roland*, laisses LVI-LVII. On dreams in the *Chanson de Roland* see Wolfgang G. van Emden, “Another Look at Charlemagne’s Dreams in the Chanson de Roland”; D.D.R. Owen, “Charlemagne’s Dreams, Baligant and Turoldus”; and Alexander Haggerty Krappe, “The Dreams of Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland*.” For dreams in the *chansons de geste* in general, in addition to Braet, see Lola Sharon Davidson, “Dreams, History and the Hero in the *Chansons de Geste*. “
Combarieu du Grès remarks that dreams are rarely found in epics which recount purely human conflicts but that they are abundantly evident in the Cycles of the King and Garin de Montglane (L’idéal humain, p. 519). These cycles deal with Christian/Saracen conflicts in which God might be expected to intervene in his own cause. In Girart de Roussillon the conflict dramatized by the poem is not between Christians and Saracens, and yet, as we have seen, it contains five dreams.

Two of the five dreams in Girart de Roussillon influence the action of the poem. The first dream is, in fact, intended to manipulate events. Elissent recounts the dream which she has had, or which she pretends to have had, to the king in order to provide motivation for her request that she be allowed to send out messengers to discover whether Girart is still alive. After she has told Charles about her dream, she informs him that she has heard rumors that Girart is living in the kingdom of Oton. It is obvious that Charles does not place any faith in Elissent’s dream. The poet’s comment at the end of the laisse makes it clear that Charles accords Elissent her wish because he believes that Girart is dead:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Per aitant l’en a fait l’ostreieson} \\
\text{Qu’el cuidoit qu’il fust morz soz Rossillon,} \\
\text{O fu nafranz el peiz soz lo menton […]}. \quad (7932-34^{12})
\end{align*}
\]

He granted her wish to her for this reason
That he thought that he had been killed beneath Roussillon,
Where he was injured in the chest under the chin.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} All text from Girart de Roussillon is cited from the Hackett edition. See Works Cited.
\textsuperscript{13} All translations from the Occitan are my own.
Elissent’s dream is a fiction of her creation. She introduces the account of the dream by assuring Charles that the events which it predicts will not be fulfilled:

«Seiner, aujaz un songe qui toz ert faus […]» (7905)

“Lord, listen to a dream which was totally false.”

Elissent knows that Charles will not send out a search party for Girart if he suspects that he might be alive. By placing the hearsay of lines 7921-22 in a dream context, she contrives to make Charles believe that all is a figment of her imagination so that he might comply with her wishes, believing that Girart is dead. Elissent is playing a very sophisticated game with her husband. She reverses the process of interpretation according to which dreams usually operate. In this case Elissent does not acquire privileged knowledge of events which are to occur through a dream. On the contrary, she already has privileged knowledge of what is about to occur. She knows that Girart is alive and that he will return to Charles’s court because she has spent the previous evening planning this return with Girart and her sister. From this privileged knowledge she constructs a dream which she uses for her own ends. While it is clear that from the reader’s perspective Elissent’s dream falls into the category of false dreams, as mentioned above, she cunningly presents her dream as a visio or as a dream which will be fulfilled. The artifice of this disguise is underlined by the correspondence between the situation in which she creates the dream and the example Macrobius gives to illustrate the visio:

amicum peregre commorantem quem non cogitabat visus sibi est reversum videre, et procedenti obvius quem vid-erat venit in amplexus. (I.3.9)

For example, a man dreams of the return of a friend who has been staying in a foreign land, thoughts of whom
never enter his mind. He goes out and presently meets his friend and embraces him (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. Stahl, p. 90).

Girart, like the friend of Macrobius’s example, has just returned to France after twenty-two years of exile.

The second dream of the poem which influences events is Girart’s dream about the hidden treasure. Girart acts upon his dream and discovers a treasure trove. Girart’s dream demands a minimum of interpretation. In Macrobean terminology it is a visio; the images it proposes are realized in the future. The process of interpretation which Girart follows is a very simple one. He applies dream to reality and discovers that reality corresponds to the dream. His interpretation of his dream is literal. Girart’s servant has had the same dream before Girart and yet Girart does not act upon the servant’s dream. It is highly unusual to find an example of a servant having a dream the events of which are ultimately sanctioned by reality since dreams in the literature of the Middle Ages are usually ascribed to high-ranking, divinely favored individuals (Braet, Le songe, pp. 72-73).

The two dreams which provoke the discovery of the Roman treasure are quite obviously a pair, bound by a relationship of corroboration. Since the dreams share the same content, the servant’s dream is authorized by Girart’s dream and Girart’s dream gains in credibility by being preceded by a similar dream.

The relationship between the dreams of Berthe and Girart which precede the narration of the miracle of Vézelay is more complex than that which exists between the dreams of Girart and his servant. Surrounded by an atmosphere of mystical obscurity, these dreams require interpretation. The second dream is not simply a repetition of the first, as in the case of the treasure dreams which could only be distinguished from each other in terms of the dreamer receiving the dream. Berthe and Girart’s dreams have in common the theme of offering a drink, which is presented in each from a different perspective. A comparison of the two dreams
highlights a theme of transformation which operates across the dreams. The person offering the drink is transformed so that the snake becomes Berthe and the venom undergoes a transubstantiation through which it becomes the holy wine from the marriage feast at Cana, itself the subject of a transformation which changed water into wine. Meaningless in isolation, each dream of this pair is enriched by association with the other.

Both Girart and Berthe seek help in interpreting their dreams. Berthe relates her dream to the monk Garcen who gives her the following interpretation:

«Donne, quar lamanest iste sainte ovre
E lo grant ben que fas a ca gent povre.» (9555-56)

“Lady, it was because you brought him this holy work
And because of the great good you do to these poor people.”

14 Sarah Kay recognizes a relationship of exchange between the dreams of Girart and Berthe in “Kings, Vassals, and Queens: Problems of Hierarchy in the Old French and Occitan Chansons de Geste” (p. 46).

15 The ambiguity of the word “lamanest” has given rise to a variety of translations and interpretations of these two lines. Paul Meyer, in Girart de Roussillon: Chanson de geste, traduite pour la première fois, translates line 9555 as follows: “Dame, c’est qu’il est affligé de l’oeuvre sainte que tu as entreprise” (p. 303). He attributes to “lamanest” the sense of the modern French “lamenter.” As far as I have been able to discern, “lamenter” is not attested in medieval Occitan with the sense of the modern French verb “lamenter.” “Lamanest” in this verse is a second-, not a third-person form of the verb. Combarieu du Grès, in La Chanson de Girart de Roussillon, translates line 9555 as follows: “Dame, la manne, c’est cette oeuvre sainte que tu as entreprise ici, et tout le bien que tu fais aux pauvres.” She understands “lamanest” as “la man est.” Her translation is based on the occurrence of “manne” in line 9553. In the Oxford
Garcen’s minimalist interpretation is unsatisfactory to the reader whose interest lies in discovering what the dream means for Berthe. He does not engage with the imagery of the dream in such a way as to relate it to Berthe’s destiny, and his interpretation is not specific to Berthe’s dream. He extracts a theme from the dream and gives the standard theological interpretation of temptation. The snake offering his venom to Berthe as if it were a spicy drink inevitably recalls the serpent of the Garden of Eden who tempts Eve to taste the fruit of the forbidden tree. This Old Testament story has as its New Testament counterpart the story of Christ who is fasting in the wilderness and whom Satan tempts to convert blocks of stone into loaves of bread (Matt. 4.1-11). The standard theological interpretation of the theme of temptation is that the Devil’s intention in his works is not so much to perpetrate evil deeds as to thwart any attempts which are made to do good. The evil will works to bring about the destruction of the good (Hemmerle, “Evil,” pp. 470-74). It is a commonplace of biblical and hagiographical narratives that men and women who have attained a certain degree of holiness are more prone to attacks from the Devil than others. In the Book of Job, to which Berthe refers at an earlier point in the hagiographical section of this poem, it is Job’s goodness which attracts the assaults of the Devil (l. 7668). Garcen’s interpretation fails to contextualize Berthe’s dream. It does not explain why she should have this particular dream at this particular juncture, nor does it suggest how she should react to the dream.

Girart gives an account of his dream to his companions Andicas and Bedelon. The poet does not specify which of the two companions interprets his dreams in the following terms:

The Olifant
«Segner, aico est biens, co te devin;
Grant joi te naist de li; Deus tu destin.» (9717-18)

“Lord, this is good, I interpret this for you;
Great joy will come to you through her; this is God’s destiny for you.”

This interpretation is hardly more satisfactory than Garcen’s interpretation of Berthe’s dream. The interpretation does not extend much beyond the surface imagery of the dream. The phrase “aico est biens” (l. 9717) does little more than affirm that the action in the dream is not threatening to Girart. Line 9718, which introduces God into the interpretation and which would appear to anticipate Girart’s spiritual salvation through Berthe’s intervention, is a straightforward transmutation into everyday language of the iconographic representation of the dream in which Berthe makes Girart drink of the holy wine of Cana.

After Berthe has participated in the miracle of Vézelay and Girart has witnessed it, Andicas, Bedelon, and Garcen reformulate their interpretation of the dreams retrospectively.\(^\text{16}\) When Girart witnesses his wife’s participation in the construction of the church with the pilgrim, he calls Andicas and Bedelon to him. Girart regrets that he ever believed that his wife might be guilty of the accusation of adultery made against

\(^{16}\) The miracle of Vézelay is as follows: Girart, suspicious of Berthe’s nightly peregrinations, follows Berthe and the pilgrim to the site where they are constructing a church. As he watches the scene is flooded by a divine light (“Une clartaz descent, si cun Deu plac” [l. 9755]), and he watches as the pilgrim and Berthe transport sand in a bag suspended from a pole. Berthe stumbles and drops her end of the pole, which remains miraculously perfectly horizontal. Girart rushes forward to help, and together as husband and wife they continue the work.
her. His companions refer back to Girart’s dream which they understand to have been fulfilled:

«Cons, or poz bien veer t’avision.» (9748)

“Count, now you can see your vision clearly.”

This statement functions in such a way as to give the impression that Girart’s dream, the interpretation of this dream, and the events which have occurred since the dream was received are intertwined in a meaningful way and that each is a corroboration of the other two. Girart’s companions who have translated his dream into the most general terms cannot fail to recognize the general structure of their broad interpretation in the events of the miracle.

When Girart explains to Berthe that he came to Vézelay to discover whether the accusations of adultery made against her were well founded, Garcen reinterprets Berthe’s dream in the light of this new information:

«Donzele, or pues veer de vostre songe.
Anc non veïstez nul qui melz s’esponge:
Li satan(a)s est li garz e sa mencoinge,
Qui vol mescal au duc e far vergoinge,
E co qu’il se movave qu’il nos esloinge.» (9825-29)

“Lady, now you can see about your dream.
Never have you seen any which expounds itself better:
The devil is the lout and his lie,
Who wished harm on the duke and wanted to bring him shame,
And the fact that he took to his heels means that he is leaving us.”
Garçen reformulates his interpretation by aligning the events of the dream with the sequence of events which have just occurred. The spirit of Garçen’s reinterpretation contradicts the spirit of his initial interpretation. In the first interpretation, Berthe finds herself under the assault of Satan because of her goodness. She is the injured, attacked party. Line 9828 of Garçen’s second interpretation makes it clear that he understands Girart to be the victim of attack. The factor which motivates this attack is not the intrinsic goodness of the attacked as in the first interpretation but the wickedness of the attacker who is designated by the derogatory “garz” (l. 9827). This reinterpretation of the dream is no more than a reiteration of the narrative which recounts the story of Ataïn. It fails to wrest from the events their true significance.

The interpretations of Girart’s and Berthe’s dreams which are given by the characters of the poem are not wholly satisfactory. There is a minimum level of correspondence between the dreams and the interpretations.

When dreams are used in narrative poetry there are three factors which enter into the play of the poem. The first of these is the dream imagery itself, the second is the narrative action which follows the dream, and the third is the interpretation of the dream offered by the characters of the poem. The expectation of the audience is that there will be a certain degree of correspondence between these three components of the narrative. In the case of the dreams about the Roman treasure these three components of the narrative stand in a direct relationship to each other and each is corroborated by the other two. The sense of obscurity and mystery which surrounds Girart’s and Berthe’s dreams results from a lack of correspondence between the dream imagery, the events of the context in which the dreams occur, and the diegetic interpretations which are given of the dreams.

Girart’s and Berthe’s dreams are not directly related to the action of the narrative. The dream which Girart receives does not influence his decision to seek out Berthe. He receives his dream as he is journeying towards Berthe, a journey which is provoked by the accusation which is
made against his wife. Berthe’s dream does not have any effect on her conduct. She continues the work which she has undertaken and her dream does not appear to have any profound effect on her actions or the spirit in which she accomplishes them. If the poet in dealing with this second pair of dreams had followed the pattern he established in the laisses which recount the dream and the discovery of treasure in which dream and narrative action are intimately related, then one might have expected to see Girart receiving a dream which would have warned him of Ataïn’s sexual attack on Berthe and of the wrongful accusation which he makes subsequently. If this schema of dreams anticipating narrative action had been applied to the second pair of dreams one might also have expected Berthe to receive a dream which anticipated her involvement in Girart’s spiritual salvation. Berthe’s dream, however, is interpreted only retrospectively by Garcen as an anticipation of Ataïn’s treacherous accusation against Berthe.

It would appear that Girart and Berthe have received the wrong dreams. Berthe’s dream appertains to Girart’s situation, while Girart’s dream outlines the destiny which is marked out for Berthe. If Girart had received Berthe’s dream, he would perhaps have been alerted to the threat which Ataïn posed to Berthe. Berthe’s dream contains the imagery of temptation which anticipates Ataïn’s attack on Berthe and his subsequent revenge which consists in accusing Berthe of committing adultery. If Berthe had received Girart’s dream, she would have been aware of the task of saving Girart’s soul, which she fulfills. The dreams of the married couple have more relevance for the situation of the opposite partner than for the partner who receives them.

Macrobius nuances his description of the *somnium* with five subdivisions which take into account the dreamer and the person with whom the dream is concerned:

huius quinque sunt species. aut enim proprium aut alienum aut commune aut publicum aut generale est. proprium est cum se quis facientem patientemve aliquid

*Olifant*
somniat, alienum cum alium, commune cum se una cum alio, publicum est cum civitati forove vel theatro seu quibuslibet publicis moenibus actibusve triste vel laetum quid aestimat accidisse, generale est cum circa solis orbem lunaremve globum seu alia sidera vel caelum omnesve terras aliquid somniat innovatum. (I.3.10-11)

There are five varieties of it [somnium]: personal, alien, social, public and universal. It is called personal when one dreams that he himself is doing or experiencing something; alien, when he dreams this about someone else; social, when his dream involves others and himself; public, when he dreams that some misfortune or benefit has befallen the city, forum, theater, public walls, or other public enterprise; universal, when he dreams that some change has taken place in the sun, moon, planets, sky, or regions of the earth. (Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. Stahl, p. 90)

The somnium alienum identifies a dream situation in which the dreamer is only indirectly involved in the dream and in which he/she dreams for another. Thus a wife may dream for her husband, a husband for his wife, or a young girl for her fiancé (Braet, Le songe, pp. 71-72). The dreams of Girart and Berthe belong to this category of the somnium alienum. Berthe dreams for Girart, while Girart dreams for Berthe. This explains the fact that the dreams become more meaningful when they are

17 In a footnote on p. 71 to his explanation of the somnium alienum, Braet gives references to nine chansons de geste in which a spouse or lover dreams for his or her partner. He lists “GirR 9705-9718 (Girart et Berthe)” which is a reference to Girart’s dream about Berthe, but other than this reference he offers no commentary and does not make reference to Berthe’s dream.
considered as a pair than if they are considered individually. Girart and Berthe are reunited after the miracle of Vézelay in an atmosphere of revelation which is both spiritual and secular. The meaning of the dreams which emerges when they are considered as a pair underlines the nature of the working partnership between husband and wife which secures the hope of salvation for both of them.

In confronting this short section of the poem of *Girart de Roussillon* which recounts the events preceding and following the miracle of Vézelay, the reader is as much engaged in the processes of interpretation as are the characters. The poet inserts two dreams into the narrative. He subsequently relates the first dream to the second in an atmosphere of revelation. The poet is clearly encouraging his audience to view the dreams as a pair. In this section of the poem the three factors of dream imagery, interpretation, and narrative events, usually synchronized in poetry which includes oneiric references, are expelled from normative narrative patterns and set at variance with each other. When the poet encourages his audience to see the dreams of Girart and Berthe as a pair, the reader is enrolled in a program of interpretation. The processes of interpretation through which the reader is guided are such that a second iconography emerges from the narrative. This second iconography is programmatic rather than oneiric. In the account of the second dream the author makes reference to the marriage of Cana when he evokes an image of Berthe offering to Girart wine which is allegedly wine from this marriage feast. The most remarkable point about the wedding at Cana is that water was transformed into wine. By encouraging his audience to compare the two dreams, the poet causes the reader to think about the differences between the two dreams and thus to register the transformation in imagery which occurs between them.

When Girart and Berthe receive each other’s dreams, they become representatives of each other. The state of matrimonial unity which they achieve through their spiritual pursuits is such that it would appear that each is a transformation of the other. Berthe and Girart need each other’s dream in order to make sense of the situations in which they find them-
The separate dreams can only fulfill their signifying functions when they are interpreted as a pair. By allocating dreams to Girart and Berthe which are more relevant to the other than to the dreamer, the poet sets up a process of exchange in which the audience becomes involved. The new iconography which emerges from the supra-narrative interpretation is one in which processes of exchange and transformation are privileged. It is an iconography which is endlessly self-referential and in which interpretation is an eternal occupation.

Macrobius’s classification of dreams distinguishes between false and true dreams, while complicating this duality with a hierarchical structure in which the *somnium* is the most significant dream. The reflection of the Macrobian classification in *Girart de Roussillon* follows the order of Macrobius’s hierarchy but downplays the bipartite division of dreams into true and false, even to the point of confusing it (is Elissent’s dream really false?). This is concordant with the general ethos of the climactic hagiographical section of the poem in which the principal occupation is with gradational patterns rather than with contrast and opposition, as in the earlier part of the poem, which recounts the hostilities between Girart and Charles. Girart is moving towards the values Berthe represents rather than opposing them with a different set of values. The characters in the hagiographical section are part of a whole, rather than members of opposing factions, and their difference is measured in terms of comparison rather than contrast. Sanctity is valorized by its position at the top end of a scale of virtues rather than being set in contrast to evil.

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18 This structure is characteristically Neoplatonic (Kruger, *Dreaming*, p. 32).
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