

3. Mathematical mysticism had a certain attraction for Augustine – cp. *De Doctrina Christiana* 2. 16 (on the use of arithmetical knowledge in the interpretation of Scripture).
4. For this whole topic see the useful work of J. Guittou, 'Le Temps et l'Éternité chez Plotin et S. Aug.', Paris, 1933.
5. Augustine held to the Plotinian conception of the Eternal Present: 'Your years stand together at the same time – your today is eternity' (*Conf.* 11. 13).
6. For Augustine and Livy see Hagendahl *op. cit.*, 650-663, and for Augustine and Sallust, Hagendahl, 631-649.

'REALITY AND NON-REALITY IN BOOK SIX OF THE AENEID'

There are two prevailing views of reality in the *Aeneid*. One is true, *verus*: sleep, ghosts, and the Underworld contribute to Aeneas' recognition of true reality. The other is a fantasy, *ficta, falsus*; it is characterized by emptiness (*inanis*), ambiguity, and the sleep/death image. Aeneas' journey to the Underworld is the critical determinant of what is true and what is false in his life.¹ His experiences there illustrate the falsity and ultimate non-reality of many circumstances and concepts in the Upper World.

Book Six is a description of a reality apart from, though reflecting, the remainder of the *Aeneid*. The mood of Book Six is one of ambiguity, uncertainty, and vagueness. Clarification of injustices and doubtful matters in the Upper World alternates with ambiguity in style and concept. The Sibyl, *somnus*, and the Underworld itself, all unclear, amorphous figures, are the sources of these clarifications. Thus ambiguities clarify other ambiguities in a subtle paradox leading to a true view of reality.

The book opens with Daedalus, a figure treated half mythologically, half realistically. He solved the puzzle of the labyrinth but was himself unable to complete the bas-relief because of sorrow for his lost son. The universal artist in possession of the truth cannot bear to portray it completely but is forced to leave his work vague and incomplete. Virgil may be implying that his own poem can be only a partial reflection of the reality he recognizes as true and complete.

Aeneas finds the Golden Bough, the key to the Underworld, enclosed by encircling dark shadows which indicate the ambiguous, semi-real existence of the branch – an existence meant to bridge the Upper world and the Underworld.²

He tries to fight the monsters at the entrance to Hades until the Sibyl explains that they are merely fragile lives without bodies, only facsimiles of shapes. Like the *vana somnia*, these creatures are non-real. Yet they have an existence of a sort in the Upper World, since they are motivating forces in men's lives. Through the Sibyl, Aeneas comes to realize their actual nullity.

The Sibyl throws Cerberus a drugged honey-cake, and that vague, fantastic creature is overcome by the bringer of fantasies, sleep. The Sibyl clarifies obscurity and ambiguity into truth and reality; sleep is her tool.

Aeneas recognizes Dido hidden by the shadows, darkly wandering amid the shades. *Obscuram* hints at her semi-existence, that same semi-existence in which Aeneas is now partaking for a time. Finally Aeneas realizes that the announcement of Dido's death was true. The Underworld has clarified an ambiguous question in his life.

Aeneas tells Deiphobus that he himself has placed a cenotaph for him on the Rhoetian shore. The significance of *inanem tumulum* is double, since the monument is empty and since the action of Aeneas has no effect on Deiphobus' state. *Inanis*, then, refers to an action in the Upper World which has been proved unreal/unfruitful in the Underworld.

Another example of the Underworld's sharp focus on reality is in Deiphobus' recollection of how the Trojans spent their last night amid pleasures which dissembled their evil results. Only now, in the Underworld, does Deiphobus realize that these were *falsa gaudia*. He also recalls that, just before his murder, he was asleep, worn out with worries and slumber, on his unlucky marriage bed. Is Deiphobus' sleep an ironic prefiguring of his death? Does it represent the unseeing state of his mind which, then blind to his wife's perfidy, is now clear-sighted with the knowledge of the Underworld? Is *somnus* again the tool of reality?

Once more, the Sibyl elucidates the reality of the Underworld. Rhadamanthus demands justice of anyone who, on earth, rejoiced in concealed evils which in reality were not useful (*furto inani*) – the crime is useless, unprofitable, and, in the strict reality of the Underworld, counts for nothing.

The ghost of Anchises often recurring pressured Aeneas to cross the portals of the Underworld: the ambiguous figure of a shade has caused Aeneas to come to the knowledge of a clarified reality. Anchises' last words to Aeneas are *fungar inani/munere*, "Let me fulfil the empty tradition" (regarding Marcellus). These words recall the tone of the poem, one in a minor key. The thought suggests the mood at the beginning of the book and Daedalus' *inani munere*. This is the ultimate despair of the sensitive intellectual in a world not of his making. That Anchises, the leader toward truth and reality, should say this in the Underworld, the final avenging place of evil and lies, adds pathos to the statement.

The departure of Aeneas and the Sibyl from the Underworld summarizes the theme of Book Six – ambiguity clarifying ambiguity. There are twin gates of sleep, one of which is said to be made of horn. Through this way an easy exit is given to the true shades. The other is shiny, made of bright ivory; but the spirits send false dreams to the upper world through it.

Sleep is the entrance to a justified reality (the Underworld). The *manes* of the Underworld clarify what is true/real (*veris umbris*) and what is false/ambiguous (*falsa insomnia*).