

Aeneas and the Sibyl leave by the ivory gate not because they are *falsa insomnia* but because they are like *falsa insomnia*: they must return to the Upper World to wander through a warped reality, unclarified by the Underworld and its *manes*.<sup>3</sup>

To glimpse even darkly the ultimate truth and reality of existence but at the same time to realize that one can understand and portray it only vaguely and incompletely is the eternal plight of the sensitive intellectual. Book Six is the source of this motif which pervades the *Aeneid* with the melancholic colouring of *lacrimae rerum*.

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#### NOTES:

1. For Book Six as a dream-journey, see J. William Hunt, *Forms of Glory, Structure and Sense in Virgil's Aeneid* (London and Amsterdam: Feffer and Simons, Inc., for Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), pp. 72-74.
2. For a different interpretation see Roger A. Hornsby, *Patterns of Action in the Aeneid: An Interpretation of Vergil's Epic Similies* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1970), pp. 83-84.
3. For further discussion, see Brooks Otis, *Virgil, A Study in Civilized Poetry* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 304; W.F. Jackson Knight, *Roman Vergil* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1944); Hans Rudolf Steiner, "Der Traum in der Aeneis," *Noctes Romanae*, 5 (Bern and Stuttgart: Paul Haupt, 1952), pp. 88-96.

#### VIRGIL AENEID 4. 188–194.<sup>1</sup>

tam ficti pravique tenax quam nuntia veri.  
haec tum multiplici populos sermone replebat  
gaudens, et pariter facta atque infecta canebat:  
venisse Aenean Troiano sanguine cretum,  
cui se pulchra viro dignetur iungere Dido;  
nunc hiemem inter se luxu, quam longa, fovere  
regnorum immemores turpique cupidine captos.

Austin in his commentary on this passage regards several of the items in the report spread abroad by Fama as not only malicious but substantially false. Thus *facta atque infecta*, anticipated by the general description of rumour's characteristics (178–188) and in particular by *tam ficti pravique tenax quam nuntia veri*, is understood to mean 'truth and falsehood', preparing the ground for a neat correspondence in 191–194; i.e. 191,2 – a true report, 193, 4 – a malicious lie. The correspondence is undeniable but to understand *infecta* as 'falsehood'

and the reports in 193,4 as lies seems mistaken. Such a view overlooks the suggestiveness of Virgil's language in this passage, and the elusive ambiguity which is so important a part of his poetic technique.

Pease (n. ad 190) sets out the problem succinctly. Of the six points of information circulated by Fama, the first three are demonstrably true. 1) Aeneas is a Trojan, 2) has arrived at Carthage, and 3) is thought by Dido to be worthy to be her husband. The second three items contain elements of fact but are more or less luridly coloured in the reporting and always in a manner defamatory of the lovers. In 193 we need not question that the lovers spent the winter together but *hiemen inter se.....fovere* is an unusual and highly suggestive expression, and *luxu* is a gratuitous addition, an ambiguous slur. As Pease indicates, *luxus* does not always contain a derogatory suggestion, and a comparison of instances of its use by Virgil is, illuminating.

*Aen.* 1. 167;      at domus interior regali splendida luxu  
                         instruitur.

*Aen.* 6. 605;      ..... epulaeque ante ora paratae  
                         regifico luxu;

Both these descriptions are of inanimate objects, evoking the splendour of an heroic or mythical past, its richness of colour, wealth of fabric, and magnificence of ornament. The poet, with his creative imagination, is recording the external appearance and impressiveness of what he sees. The context altogether lacks a moral dimension: *luxu* can only be understood as an objective term denoting that royal splendour associated in the ancient mind with the palaces of legend and myth.

However in *G.* 3. 135 the context offers a quite different perspective.

                         hoc faciunt, nimio ne luxu obtusior usus  
                         sit genitali arvo et sulcos oblimet inertis,

Here, *luxus* represents idleness as a potential hazard threatening the fruitful propagation and continuance of the herd. Catullus in his lament on the destructive effects of *otium* (51. 15f. *otium et reges prius et beatas / perdidit urbes*) is similarly aware of this threat to the social and moral fabric, and in Sallust (e.g. cf. *Cat.* 53. 5 *luxu atque desidia civitas conrupta est*) *luxus* is specifically a mode of life detrimental to civic well-being. *luxus* then, in a context where a moral dimension is implicit, may be said to represent that habit of ease and indulgence which breeds an appetite for pleasure and which is hostile to the needs and aspirations of the world of reality, to the claims of utility, productiveness and self-preservation. Yet explicit moralising can be avoided because of a common acceptance by both poet and reader of a moral order whose values are those which protect and enhance the real world and to which *luxus* as a mode of behaviour poses a threat.

In the passage under consideration *luxu* may appropriately bear both meanings. For Dido to entertain her princely guest *luxu* is appropriate to their regal station and legendary world: (in this sense also *luxu* is a very apt term for the splendid exhibition of

pomp which precedes the royal hunt, 4. 130–150), but in addition, the moral implications<sup>2</sup> of such behaviour would be clear to a Roman reader and are doubtless intentionally suggested by the Virgilian ambiguity. As though to confirm the suggestion, Iarbas' response at 198ff. is thoroughly Roman: his self-righteous indignation at sacrifices rendered with no return reveals a typically Roman and commercial attitude to formal worship, and his puritanical scorn at the effeminate appearance of Aeneas (*cum semiviro comitatu, / Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem / subnexus*) would have brought a gleam to the censorious eye of a Cato.

In the fifth item of rumour, Fama alleges that the lovers have been *regnorum immemores* (194). Austin in his note inexplicably calls this a lie. To support this he cites 4. 260ff. where Mercury alights to find Aeneas busy helping with the construction of the new city of Carthage. But as Mercury himself soon makes clear, he had no business to be so engaged. His efforts to assist in the building of Carthage were a 'waste of time' (*Libycis teris otia terris?*, 271) and put at risk the inheritance (*regnum Italiae*) owed by destiny to his son. Moreover he contemptuously describes his behaviour at Carthage as neglect if not desertion of his duty to his people (*regni rerumque oblite tuorum*, 267). As for Dido, the frenzy of her unconsummated passion had produced a similar result described earlier in Book 4 (cf. 65–89). In her obsession and frustration the building work had ceased altogether and every crane and hoist had become silent (*pendent opera interrupta.....*). Both are then in some measure guilty of neglect of their respective kingdoms. Dido has been so in the past, Aeneas is so still, for his kingdom lies in a future destiny and must still be sought.

It is reasonable therefore to conclude that this further allegation was substantially true, though the malicious partiality in the selection and representation of facts reflects, and was surely intended to exploit, a deep-seated Roman moral attitude which exalted the primacy of the claims of social duty over individual considerations of feeling.<sup>3</sup> Similarly *turpique cupidine captos* (194) is a critical but by no means false description of the lovers' behaviour. Dido has persuaded herself that her relationship with Aeneas was an honourable one (*coniugium vocat* 172), but Virgil does not let the reader forget that she was mistaken (*hoc praetexit nomine culpam* 172), perhaps culpably so for it was surely her deep sense of guilt as well as of utter loss on losing Aeneas which caused her eventual self-destruction. She had broken the restraining bonds of *pudor* (cf. 4. 55) which in affectionate relations protects the prior claim of duty. In the context of a repressive Roman morality which Fama hypocritically espouses, this love affair was evil.<sup>4</sup>

This suggested interpretation requires a revised rendering of *facta atque infecta* (190) in place of the usual 'truth and falsehood'. 188 completed the description in general terms of the methods employed by Fama. *ficti* ('what has been fashioned') describes a report which has been 'doctored' or 'packaged' to inflame the prejudices of a particular audience, and *pravi* ('crooked') a report that has been maliciously twisted to provoke an expected response. Rumour is accordingly "as ready to latch on to reports that have been altered and twisted by others as to report the truth". But the phrase *facta atque infecta* is not a repetition or echo of 188 but an anticipatory summary of 191–194 referring to the particular rumours regarding Dido and Aeneas. *infecta* should be understood to mean not 'falsehood' definitively, but suggestively, *quae non facta sunt*.<sup>5</sup> A translation might be: "she told both what they had

done and what they had failed to do”. In particular *infecta* anticipates *regnorum immemores* which relates to a duty which the lovers have failed or are failing to fulfil. It seems not inappropriate here to recall the Christian formula ‘sins of commission and omission’. Virgil’s expression also should be understood as a suggestive, all-embracing formula rather than a precise antithesis.

The essential meaning of 190 is that Fama reveals all, indiscriminately (*pariter*) by the skilful methods described in 174–188. Fama is *impia* (cf. 4. 298); she is untrammelled either by a sense of loyalty or any other social restraint. And she has a momentum of her own which, though working through human agents, seems to be more than human in its speed, force and potential destructiveness.

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NOTES:

1. I am grateful to Mr. J.C.B. Foster for helpful advice and criticism.
2. Similar overtones are perceptible in Virgil’s evocative adaptation of Ennius’ description of the fallen splendour of Priam’s palace; cf. V. *Aen.* 2. 504.
3. Fama omits to mention the renewed building made possible by Dido’s release in happy fulfilment after 160ff., and Aeneas’ neglect of duty is perhaps overstated since he has as yet made no irrevocable decision about his future actions.
4. Dr. A.J. Woodman has brought to my notice an interesting parallel in Velleius Paterculus’ description of the character of Julia, daughter of Augustus, Vell. 2. 100. 3. *Quippe filia eius Julia, per omnia tanti parentis ac viri immemor, nihil, quod facere aut pati turpiter posset femina, luxuria libidine infectum reliquit....*
5. cf. Pl. *Most.* 184; *Truc.* 730.





