

metaphor for what every politician must be prepared to do'.¹⁰⁶ It is in his confrontation with Dido that the tensions inherent in Aeneas' role become most acute. In Dido he faces the most impassioned and eloquent speaker in the poem. He feels the justice and the injustice of her speech, but he does not answer her in the same tenor. With hard-won self-control he tells her that the way she uses words is profitless and cruel, and he attempts to give an explanation, to reach some understanding. His words do not achieve their aim: but there is nothing in the poem to give us reason to believe that any other words would have been more effective.

¹⁰⁶ Loc. cit. (n. 98).

Williams - Unit 8

9

The Sixth Book of the *Aeneid*

R. D. WILLIAMS

The sixth book is the focal point of the *Aeneid*; it completes and concludes what has gone before, and it provides a new impetus for the second half of the poem. It is not an isolated piece of theology; it has its work to do within the design of the poem. It is of vital importance in the development of the main themes of the *Aeneid*, and it is on three of these that I want to concentrate as we accompany Aeneas on his journey from the cave at Avernus to the Gates of Ivory. We shall be concerned firstly with how a memorable picture—or perhaps two memorable pictures—of the world after death is built up from the rich and tangled heritage of poetry, folklore, philosophy, and religion. In the words of T. R. Glover—to whose warm and sensitive appreciation of the poet Virgilian studies are deeply indebted—‘we find here as elsewhere that Virgil tries to sum up all that is of value in the traditions, the philosophies, and the fancies of the past’.¹ It is in the later part of Book 6 that Virgil comes nearest to a solution of the problem of human suffering with which the whole poem is so preoccupied, as he gropes towards a conception of the life after death in which sin is purified away and virtue rewarded. Secondly, the golden hopes for the future of Rome and the Roman world are in this book expressed with a patriotic pride more complete than anywhere else; the vision of the temporal destiny of the world follows upon the vision of the spiritual afterlife. Thirdly, and this is the aspect which I shall stress most because it is not generally stressed enough, this book (like the rest of the *Aeneid*) is above all about Aeneas himself, his character and resolution, his experiences, past, present, and future. We must always remember that the aim of the book is not primarily philosophical or theological—and in this it differs from the myths of Plato to which it owes so much; the aim is to present a poetic vision which has special reference to Aeneas and Rome within the design and framework of the total epic poem.

¹ T. R. Glover, *Virgil* (7th edn., London, 1942), p. 258.

The source material² from which the sixth book is built may be traced very far back, beginning in Greek literature with the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*. Virgil's debt to Homer, as we shall see, is considerable and significant in the part of the book concerned with the journey to Elysium, but practically non-existent in the last part. In Homer death was not seen as a welcome deliverance from life, but as a wretched and cheerless existence in every way inferior to life on earth. The notion of the afterlife as a release from toil which we find in the last part of Book 6 of the *Aeneid* probably springs from popular belief and folklore crystallized and organized by Orphic mystery religions³ and Pythagorean philosophy; many Orphic ideas were developed by Plato, and many were assimilated in Stoicism. Orphic poems describing a descent into the Underworld (a *katabasis*) began to be written, perhaps from the sixth century onwards. The two most famous heroes who performed this exploit were Hercules and Orpheus himself (whose story is told in the second half of the fourth *Georgic*). Orpheus was also connected with the elaborate and exclusive ritual of the Eleusinian mysteries, but the relationship of the sixth book of the *Aeneid* to these secret initiation ceremonies is not nearly as close as is sometimes stated. It is only in the most non-technical sense of the word that we can speak of the 'initiation' ritual⁴ of Aeneas.

One of the best-known journeys to the Underworld is the *katabasis* of Dionysus in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where we see the background of Orphic mysticism dominated, as one would expect in comedy, by meetings with the figures of popular folklore (Charon, Cerberus, Aeacus, Pluto). Exactly the opposite is the case in the myths of Plato. These have a background of popular topography (Styx, Acheron, Cocytus, Lethe), but the whole emphasis is on the judgement and purification of the souls. Beyond doubt the myths of the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedrus*, and perhaps especially the story of Er in the *Republic*, Book 10, played a great part both in shaping Virgil's deepest thought and in awakening his poetic imagination.

In Latin literature the first book of Ennius' *Annals* had a famous passage connected with Pythagorean beliefs,⁵ and Cicero's *Somnium*

² For a short and clear account of the sources see H. Butler's *Aeneid VI*, Introduction. F. Fletcher (*Aeneid VI*, Intro.) gives translations of the passages from Plato.

³ On Orphism see W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (London, 1952), esp. ch. 5.

⁴ See Guthrie, op. cit. 154 f., on the Eleusinian mysteries; see also L.-A. Constans, *L'Énéide de Virgile* (Paris, 1938), pp. 208 f.

⁵ Ennius *Ann.* 15 V, a reference to transmigration of souls and Ennius' dream that he

Scipionis gives a romanized version of a Platonic myth about the souls in the Underworld. We have fragments of evidence about other writings which may have been Virgil's more immediate models, and Norden argues strongly⁶ that a lost work of Posidonius was the immediate source from which Virgil drew much. But the essential thing about Book 6 of the *Aeneid* is that Virgil here aims at a synthesis of a long literary tradition which will fulfil his poetic purposes at this stage in the *Aeneid*, and his creative imagination is more likely to have been fired by Homer and Plato than by Posidonius.

Book 6 may naturally be divided into three sections—the preparations for the descent (to l. 263), the journey through the Underworld (to l. 675), and the explanation of the rebirth and the vision of Roman heroes. I shall not deal here with the first section, save only to say that one of its main functions is to build up an aura of solemnity and mystery. Symbols of magic and folklore, such as the labyrinth⁷ and the golden bough,⁸ and the detailed description of ritual sacrifice combine to produce a supernatural atmosphere of awe and dread appropriate for the descent to the Underworld at the lake where no birds fly.

The events in the Underworld are presented in two parts: first a journey, a *katabasis*, through the various territories of the land of ghosts; and secondly a philosophical or theological account by Anchises of the notions of purification and rebirth, which introduces the pageant of Roman heroes by the stream of Lethe. Now in a way these parts are independent of one another, they perform different functions in the poem, and they certainly have not been combined by Virgil into a single consistent doctrine. That is what I meant at the beginning by speaking of Virgil's two pictures of the Underworld. The static presentation of Limbo, for example, where we are led to think that Dido and Deiphobus will always stay, does not cohere with the doctrine of rebirth expounded by Anchises. Attempts to minimize the inconsistency by suggesting that

was a reincarnation of Homer. Cf. Hor. *Ep.* 2. 1. 52 (of Ennius), *somnia Pythagorea*, and *Odes* 1. 28. 9 f.

⁶ E. Norden, *Aeneid VI* (3rd edn., Leipzig, 1926, repr. 1957).

⁷ Some references are given in my note on *Aen.* 5. 588, where the simile of a labyrinth is applied to the *husus Troiae*.

⁸ Virgil's sources for the talisman of the golden bough are not known. We do not find it in earlier classical literature and its significance in Roman folklore cannot be defined with precision. Frazer, in the great work on comparative anthropology and folklore to which he gave the title of *The Golden Bough*, associates it with various kinds of tree magic and particularly with the mistletoe (with which Virgil compares it in a simile, 205 ff.). Servius links it with the worship of Diana at Aricia and the *rex nemorensis*. See also R. A. Brooks, *AJP* 74 (1953), 260 f., where the bough is discussed as a dual symbol of life and death.

the βιαιοθάνατοι, the untimely dead, stay in Limbo only for the term of the rest of their natural life (as Norden originally argued) do not correspond with the text: some of them would already have completed their stay before Aeneas came. It is much more to the point to look for the poetic reasons for the discrepancies; an admirable example of this approach, to which I am much indebted in parts of this paper, is the stimulating short article recently published by Brooks Otis.⁹ Briefly, what we may say is this: that the mythology of the *katabasis* gives a setting for events of the tragic past, and the theology a setting for hopes of the future. Within the framework of the *katabasis* come the ghosts of Aeneas' past—Palinurus, Dido, Deiphobus; in the theology is Virgil's message of hope beyond the grave, leading to his patriotic presentation of the character and ideals of Rome, for which Aeneas must continue to strive onwards. These are points which I shall elaborate further on. Let us first consider the events and intention of the *katabasis*.

For the framework of Aeneas' journey through the Underworld Virgil has selected and organized from the rich material available in past literature, popular folklore, and probably pictorial art.¹⁰ But within this traditional setting of the well-known rivers, of the monsters and mythology of the past, he has included the individual ghosts special to the story of Aeneas, those of Palinurus, Dido, Deiphobus. In this book he reiterates (in reverse order) tragic events from the earlier part of the poem, and brings us again in another context face to face with the same reality of death, the death of those already known to us. The setting is dark and melancholy; little or no consolation is suggested; no hint is given here of the hope of expiation. In this part of the book Aeneas journeys amidst the sorrows of the past.

There is in the *katabasis* a quite marked similarity in incident and episode to the *Odyssey*, Book 11, affording a sharp contrast with the wholly un-Homeric note of hope after death which Virgil presents in the last section of the book. The topography is, of course, un-Homeric, for in Homer there is no journey: the ghosts come up to the pit which Odysseus has dug. But the motivation of the visit is similar: the instructions given to Aeneas by Helenus (to consult the Sibyl) and by Anchises (to meet him in Elysium) both recall *Od.* 10. 490 ff., where Circe tells Odysseus that he must go to Hades in order to consult

⁹ *TAPA* 90 (1959), 165 ff.

¹⁰ See Pausanias 10. 28 f. for a full description of Polygnotus' picture of the Underworld.

Teiresias about his future voyage. In Virgil as in Homer the hero meets ghosts of his past, with the difference that in Virgil there is far more emphasis on the previous events of the poem. The women with Dido in the *lugentes campi* recall Homer's heroines (especially in *Od.* 11. 321 ff.); the judge Minos is mentioned by both poets; Virgil's Tartarus includes the traditional sinners described by Homer.

There are similarities of incident too. Elpenor is clearly a model for Palinurus; each comes first in the description, each had died recently and begs for burial. The silence of Dido (6. 469 ff.) recalls the silence of the angry Ajax (*Od.* 11. 563 f.). The dialogue between Aeneas and Deiphobus has some points of similarity with that between Odysseus and Agamemnon. Finally Virgil has some verbal reminiscences of the *Odyssey* (e.g. *Aen.* 6. 305 ff., *Od.* 11. 36 ff., the ghosts come flocking; *Aen.* 6. 700 ff., *Od.* 11. 206 ff., the ghost eludes embrace).

To these Homeric reminiscences Virgil has added ideas from many other sources (as we have seen), especially from Orphic 'Descents to the Underworld', and has used this traditional material to present an experience which is essentially personal to Aeneas himself, and above everything an integral part of the development of Aeneas' character and resolution. In his journey Aeneas is in a sense travelling again through his past life; he must come to terms with the past in order to face the future. As Brooks Otis puts it,¹¹ he cannot alter the past; 'he can only leave it, but in recalling it and leaving it he achieves also freedom from its "traumatic" hold on him'.

The journey is prefaced with a new invocation (264 ff.), asking the gods to allow the poet to reveal things deep hidden in darkness. It begins in slow and sonorous lines:

ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram
perque domos Ditis uacuas et inania regna,
quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna
est iter in siluis, ubi caelum condidit umbra
Iuppiter et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem. (6. 268–72)

Thus the scene is set; immediately round the porch of Hades throngs a crowd of horrid shapes, personifications of evil things, of earthly experiences or ideas concerned with suffering or sin: Grief, Avenging Cares, War, Furies, Discord. Past the entrance are monsters, Scyllas, Chimaeras, Gorgons, and many more, the supernatural enemies of mankind against whom the greatest of heroes (such as Hercules) were

¹¹ *Op cit.* 168.

often matched in myth. The opening scene has been like a medieval iconography of Hell, full of the terrors of popular folklore which Lucretius had tried so passionately to dispel from men's minds.

The route leads to Acheron, or Styx, the river which the unburied may not cross. Virgil lingers on his description of the ferryman Charon, perhaps the best known of all Pluto's people. He is a 'demon' of folk-story, often portrayed (as Charun) on Etruscan tombs, but in literature he had become less terrifying: he is a grumpy but not unattractive character in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, and Virgil's presentation of him is to some degree mock-heroic, affording a contrast with the pathos of other elements in this part of the story. To Charon come flocking the shades of the newly dead, thick as leaves in autumn or birds migrating when summer is over:

stantab orantes primi transmittere cursum
tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore. (6. 313-14)

Aeneas asks why some are taken across the river and others not, and the Sibyl tells him that only those who have been buried may cross; the others must wait for a hundred years. Here Aeneas sees Leucaspis and Orontes, who were shipwrecked off Carthage (1. 113 ff.), and then his trusted and beloved helmsman Palinurus, lost overboard on the last stages of the voyage.¹² This is Aeneas' first personal experience in the Underworld, and their meeting and conversation is described at some length. It is the first of the events of the past which Aeneas must live through again as he journeys in the Underworld.

The tone now changes abruptly as Charon sees Aeneas and the Sibyl and hails them brusquely. We cannot quite call the scene comic, but it is handled with a certain irony and detachment. Palinurus has been very real, Charon we need not believe in. He shouts at his visitors from a long way off (*iam inde*, 385; *iam istinc*, 389), and his words are peremptory, blustering, and a little naïve as he tells of previous occasions when he wrongly stretched a point in favour of Hercules and Theseus. The Sibyl first appeals to him by the *pietas* of Aeneas, but it is the production of the golden bough which Charon can better understand, and he gives in at once. He brings his boat in, shifts the other passengers up, and takes the weighty figure of Aeneas aboard. The boat creaks and the water comes in at the seams—but they get across.

The irony continues in the description of Cerberus.¹³ The monsters

¹² On this see M. C. J. Putnam, *HSCPh* 66 (1962), 205 ff.

¹³ Cerberus the watchdog occurs in Hom. *Il.* 8. 366 ff. and *Od.* 11. 623 ff., but not yet

of Orcus present no real terrors. As the golden bough had convinced Charon, so the sop suffices for Cerberus, and as he lies extended and unconscious on the ground. Aeneas and the Sibyl make their way onwards. In this part of the journey the 'machinery' of Hell, the horrid shapes at the entrance, the ferryman, the dog, have acted as background; in the foreground, because of the personal involvement of Aeneas, has been the shade of the unburied Palinurus.

Immediately across the Styx is Virgil's Limbo, the region of the *ἄωροι*, the *βαιοθάνατοι*, the untimely dead. Here are those who died in infancy, those who were falsely condemned (with Minos rejudging their cases), those who committed suicide; then in the Fields of Mourning those who died of love, and at the end of the region warriors who died gloriously in battle. The first three divisions are briefly described; then Virgil introduces the Fields of Mourning with a rapid list of seven mythological heroines making little claim on our personal sympathy. The impact is sudden and violent when he continues:

inter quas Phoenissa recens a uulnere Dido
errabat silua in magna. (6. 450-1)

Aeneas speaks to the dim phantom in terms which take us back in the most compelling way to the fourth book with reminiscences of thought and diction: *infelix Dido* (6. 456, 4. 596), *inuitus regina* (6. 460, 4. 361), *sed me iussa deum* (6. 461, 4. 396), and finally (with powerful irony) Aeneas' words *quem fugis?* (6. 466) recall Dido's *mene fugis?* (4. 314). Dido makes no reply, as the ghost of Ajax in Homer had made none to Odysseus, and turning from Aeneas in hatred goes to join Sychaeus. Aeneas tries to follow her—

prosequitur lacrimis longe et miseratur euntem. (6. 476)

At this moment he is looking back to the sorrows and tragedy of the past, not forward to the glory of Rome.

In the region of the famous warriors Virgil again gives a long list of well-known names before concentrating our attention upon one. Three heroes of the Theban saga are mentioned, then eight Trojans, none of them strongly particularized; then a host of Greeks, turning to flight with feeble cries, like the faint phantoms of the Homeric Underworld. And now again after the crowd scenes the light turns on to one single figure—Deiphobus. He has not himself played the large part in the story

named. He is first named in Hes. *Theog.* 311. By Virgil's time he was very much a figure of literary convention; cf. Hor. *Odes* 2. 13. 33 ff., 3. 11. 15 ff.

of the *Aeneid* which Palinurus and Dido had played: the only previous mention of him was in connection with the burning of his house in Troy (2. 310). But here he stands for the whole of the second book of the *Aeneid*; as Palinurus represents the voyage and Dido the stay in Africa, so Deiphobus represents the events of Troy's last night. He, like Palinurus and Dido, belongs to the past; but his last words as he says farewell to Aeneas take us forward to the future:

i decus, i, nostrum; melioribus utere fatis. (6. 546)

Between Limbo with its ghosts of Aeneas' past and the vision of the unborn future with which the book ends stand the descriptions of Tartarus and Elysium. Virgil's Tartarus is firmly based on the literary tradition: the torments of Tityos, Tantalus, and Sisyphus are described in Homer,¹⁴ and Tartarus as the place of punishment for the great sinners is an essential part of the Underworld in Platonic myth.¹⁵ A fine passage in Lucretius¹⁶ gives the Epicurean rationalization of the myths of Tityos, Tantalus, and Sisyphus, and there are frequent references in Horace's *Odes* to these familiar figures of literature and folklore. Virgil's description is set in the form of a speech by the Sibyl, a method which increases the rhetorical possibilities of a subject naturally suited to the grandiose style. As well as the named sinners the Sibyl tells of groups of people defined by their particular sin. This again is traditional,¹⁷ but here is specially pointed by particular relevance to the Roman world in references to family and civil strife ('hic quibus inuisi fratres ... quique arma secuti impia ... uendidit hic auro patriam ... fixit leges pretio ...'), or to moral turpitude ('fraus innexa clienti ... ob adulterium caesi ... uetitosque hymenaeos').

But the Sibyl hastens Aeneas' steps, the golden bough is presented, and we come into the full light of Elysium. Again there is a Homeric prototype for this passage (the description of the Elysian plain which is the home of those born of gods),¹⁸ but there are Orphic elements too, as is indicated at the beginning by the mention of the Thracian priest (Orpheus, 645) and at the end by the meeting with Musaeus, his disciple; and there are quite marked similarities with Orphic elements in Pindar.¹⁹ Virgil has woven a picture of haunting beauty, using all his metrical skill to make a tone-poem of serenity and peace:

¹⁴ *Od.* 11. 576 ff.

¹⁵ *Phaedo* 113 e, *Gorg.* 526 b. ¹⁶ 3. 978 ff.

¹⁷ Plato, *Phaedo* 113 e, Aristoph. *Frogs* 146 ff.

¹⁸ *Od.* 4. 561 ff.

¹⁹ e.g. *Ol.* 2. 61 ff., *Fragg.* 114, 127 (Bowra).

his demum exactis, perfecto munere diuae,
deuenero locos laetos et amoena uirecta
fortunatorum nemorum sedesque beatas.
largior hic campos aether et lumine uestit
purpureo, solemque suum, sua sidera norunt. (6. 637-41)

Interwoven with the description of Elysium are two lists of its inhabitants. First come the names of the greatest Trojan heroes of the past, those who have made possible the national achievement of Rome soon to be prophesied by Anchises. Secondly there are the unnamed people whose place is won by their special qualities. These lines deliberately recall by contrast the list of sinners in Tartarus (608 ff.). The emphasis here is not on initiation or ritual, but on moral qualities. There are those who were wounded fighting for their country, pure priests, poets devoted to their art, those who enriched human life by discoveries, and (a very wide category indeed, in no way exclusive) those who made people remember them by their service—'quique sui memores aliquos fecere merendo'. Here is the note of hope, the prospect for the good of a life of bliss in the hereafter. Homer's Elysian plain was exclusively for those of divine birth; Virgil's groves of the blessed are open to all human beings who by their virtue have deserved to be in paradise.

When Musaeus leads Aeneas to Anchises the journey through the Underworld is concluded, and we come to the final section of the book, the revelation in search of which the journey has been made. Aeneas is still at this moment a person involved in his past, somewhat bewildered and uncertain. Anchises' first words to him reveal the anxiety which he had felt as he watched his son's groping efforts to fulfil his mission. 'Venisti tandem', he says, 'you are here at last, and the dangers of the journey (*iter durum*) have been overcome by your sense of mission (*pietas*).' 'Quantis iactatum nate periculis', he continues, and 'quam metui ne quid Libyae tibi regna nocerent.' Here is the end of the story of Dido; it is now in the past where it must belong, and the memory of those tragic events is to be muted, though by no means erased, by the prospects and hopes of a new destiny for Troy.

For a little longer the emphasis stays on the human frailty of Aeneas. Anchises' work is done, and his paradise achieved; for Aeneas much remains to be done. The solitude of Aeneas is poignantly presented in the lines from Homer:

ter conatus ibi collo dare brachia circum;
 ter frustra comprehensa manus effugit imago,
 par leuibus uentis uolucrique simillima somno. (6. 700-2)

We see him still bewildered, asking his father about the ghosts at the river of Lethe, quite unaware of the mysteries about to be revealed to him.

Anchises' explanation of the doctrine of purification and rebirth is very short (twenty-eight lines altogether), and written in a style most reminiscent of Lucretius, who had expounded his ideas of the world at much greater length and to a very different effect. The Orphic and Pythagorean ideas of this passage had to a large extent (though not wholly) been assimilated in Stoicism, and in several places Anchises' words are very close to orthodox Stoic belief.²⁰ The body is thought of as a tomb in which the soul is temporarily buried; here we have the essence of the Orphic doctrine made famous by Plato. The body stains and defiles the soul with its mortal passions and behaviour, and at death much of this defilement still remains. It is therefore necessary for the soul to be purified of its taints, by wind or water or fire. During this process all endure their own selves—*quisque suos patimur manes*—that is, are conscious of their guilt and sins and have to live with them until they are purged away. Then all pass through Elysium; a few remain there while purification is completed (before moving on to the ultimate heaven of the good), and the rest go to the river of forgetfulness to prepare for rebirth.

We must dwell for a moment on this passage about Elysium. It has given rise to great difficulty, and to all sorts of ingenious and unconvincing transpositions and punctuations, and the perusal of Conington's long and complicated note engenders a feeling of bewilderment, and makes the faint-hearted ready to accept his conclusion that 'here we have one of the passages in the *Aeneid* which Virgil left unfinished'. But the difficulty arises entirely from the false assumption that Elysium here is the ultimate home of the blessed. The correct interpretation has been given quite often before and after Conington, but it still has by no means won the total assent which it deserves. It consists of accepting that Virgil means what he says in the order in which he has said it: that after purification by wind, water, or fire all go through Elysium and a few stay there until the long passage of time (i.e. 10,000 years) completes their

²⁰ Specially Stoic are the *spiritus intus*, the *igneus uigor*; see C. Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 275 ff.

purification and makes them fit to go on from Elysium to their ultimate paradise. The remainder wait 1,000 years in a separate part for rebirth.

ergo exercentur poenis ueterumque malorum
 supplicia expendunt; aliae panduntur inanes
 suspensae ad uentos, aliis sub gurgite uasto
 infectum eluitur scelus aut exuritur igni.
 quisque suos patimur manes. exinde per amplum
 mittimur Elysium et pauci laeta arua tenemus
 donec longa dies perfecto temporis orbe
 concretam exemit labem, purumque relinquit
 aetherium sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem.
 has omnes, ubi mille rotam uoluere per annos,
 Lethaeum ad fluuium deus euocat agmine magno,
 scilicet immemores supera ut conuexa reuisant
 rursus, et incipiant in corpora uelle reuerti. (6. 739-51)

The idea that Elysium is not the final paradise but the place from which the blessed move on to their ultimate communion with God is suggested in Plato (e.g. *Phaedo* 114c) and seems to have been frequent in Neo-Platonic and Orphic eschatology. In cosmological terms the soul moved from the air above the earth where it underwent its purification to Elysium the moon, before finally proceeding to the sun, or the pure ether of God.

Why then has so much difficulty been felt about this passage? Because at the end of the *katabasis* Virgil has given the impression that Elysium is the ultimate home of the blessed. But this is because Elysium is and must be the end of the journey of the *katabasis*. There is no question of Aeneas and the Sibyl going any farther. The ultimate ether of God cannot be in the Underworld, and in any case Anchises is waiting in Elysium. The requirement of Virgil's art ends at Elysium in the journey, but in the theology it extends further, to the future and final home of the spirit. The viewpoint is different. Just as the static presentation of Limbo (needed for Dido and Deiphobus) does not come into the theology, so Elysium suffices as the ultimate home in the journey, but not in the theology. We often say vaguely that the sixth book of the *Aeneid* is the creation of a poet not the consistent doctrine of a theologian; if the statement is to have any meaning, it is this: that the poetic requirement of the journey (for Aeneas to live again through his past) and the poetic requirement of the doctrine of rebirth (to reveal the future) are each more important to Virgil than the consistency of a single standpoint. We must accept Aeneas' arrival in Elysium after his journey as the end of

what has gone before, and Anchises' speech as the beginning of what comes after.

In this speech of Anchises we have the fullest exposition which the *Aeneid* affords of Virgil's religious attitude. The general picture is one of hope after death, one in which virtue is rewarded, one in which the unexplained suffering of this life may find its explanation. The emphasis on mortal life which we see in Homer and early Greek lyric poetry had been challenged from the sixth century onwards by the Orphic idea of an afterlife more real and rewarding than mortal life, and at this point in Book 6 Virgil has brought Aeneas right away from the ideas of the Homeric world of Troy to the spiritual climate of his own Rome.

The doctrine of rebirth thus expounded by Anchises gives a most natural setting for the final section of the book, the patriotic description of the pageant of Roman heroes yet unborn, awaiting their turn by the banks of Lethe. In a certain sense they already exist and as it were pass before us as persons. The impact is therefore more immediate and actual than in either of the other two great patriotic foreshadowings of Roman achievement, the words of Jupiter in *Aen.* 1. 257 f., and the pictures on Aeneas' shield in *Aen.* 8. 626 f. Between the spoken prophecy of Jupiter and the pictorial prophecy of Vulcan comes the cavalcade of the ghosts of the heroes themselves.

Virgil's purpose is to portray, to Aeneas as he reaches his promised land and to his readers at the turning-point in the centre of his poem, the qualities and values of the Roman way of life as exemplified in the heroes of her long history. We can trace the influence of the *exempla*²¹ of the philosophical and rhetorical schools; we can observe how Virgil's picture is affected by the carved processions to be seen everywhere in Rome on friezes and monuments of all kinds (for example, Silvius leaning on his spear gives a statuesque impression²²); but, above all, the method he uses is that of the poet, employing the movement of the verse to explain and emphasize the subject-matter, at one time building up an impression with a rapid grouping of names, at another dwelling for a time in more heightened diction on an individual's achievement, making a unity from a wide variety of emotional and intellectual presentations of the character of Rome.

The pageant begins chronologically with Silvius of Alba, the successor of Ascanius who was born in the forest and gave his name to the

²¹ As Cicero proudly said (*Off.* 3. 47), 'plena exemplorum est nostra res publica'; cf. also *ibid.* 1. 61, and the work of Valerius Maximus, which is arranged as a series of *exempla*.

²² Other pictorial touches are at 722, 779–80, 784 ff., 808, 824–5.

dynasty that ruled in Alba Longa. Next follow in rapid succession Procas, Capys, Numitor, Silvius Aeneas; and the tension begins to rise as we hear of the famous little towns of the Alban confederacy which they were destined to found. Then the movement rises to a crescendo as we come to Romulus, first founder of the city itself, of Rome the great mother-city, *felix prole uirum*. In a strikingly pictorial simile the turret-crowned hills of Rome are compared with the mural crown of Cybele, great mother of the gods, a Trojan deity destined—like Aeneas and his men—to come to Italy. At this point the chronological arrangement is broken, and the crescendo swells to its loudest for Rome's second founder,²³ the Emperor Augustus, who will restore the Golden Age and spread Rome's sway over all the world, over vaster tracts even than Hercules or Bacchus had traversed.²⁴ And it is here, at this moment of highest emotion, that Anchises breaks off to ask his son whether he still feels any hesitation about continuing his task:

et dubitamus adhuc uirtute extendere uires
aut metus Ausonia prohibet consistere terra? (6. 806–7)

Now there will be no more hesitation (as there had been, for instance, in Sicily when the ships were set on fire and Aeneas wondered whether to stay there, forgetting the fates, *oblitus fatorum*). Now Aeneas is strengthened by this vision for the fulfilment of his task, however difficult.

This supreme moment of the pageant passes, and we turn to its continuation. In quick succession follow other kings of early Rome: Numa, Tullus, Ancus, the Tarquins; then the founder of the republic, the proud-hearted²⁵ Brutus with his inflexible devotion to discipline. Again comes a throng of famous names—Decii, Drusi, Torquatus, Camillus—and then the two great leaders Caesar and Pompey—leaders of civil war.

The theme of Roman guilt is left on an unfinished line—

²³ There had been a proposal that Augustus should receive the title Romulus (Suet. *Aug.* 7).

²⁴ Augustus is thus compared with two of the most famous of deified mortals; cf. Hor. *Odes* 3. 3. 9 f., where Augustus is associated as a god with Pollux, Hercules, Bacchus, Romulus.

²⁵ The suggested punctuation after *superbam*, so as to give the epithet to Tarquin, is wholly unacceptable. It results in a misplacement of *-que* in the next line which is totally un-Virgilian. In Virgil's presentation of the tradition about Brutus' sons we are not asked to approve or disapprove, but to sympathize. Necessarily some thought of Brutus the conspirator (another *Brutus ultor*) occurs to the reader, but Virgil does not here take up any political position. On the attitude of the early empire to the conspirators see the fine passage in Tac. *Ann.* 4. 34–5.

proice tela manu, sanguis meus... (6. 835)

and we pass again to triumph, this time the triumph of the Trojan-Romans over the Greek world which had so recently destroyed Troy. The victory is stated in terms appropriate to Aeneas' own times: Rome will overcome Argos and Agamemnon's Mycenae and the Macedonian kings descended from Achilles, thus avenging the city of their ancestors. Last of all in the cavalcade comes a torrent of famous names: Cato, Cossus, the Gracchi, the Scipios, Fabricius, Regulus, and finally Fabius Maximus Cunctator. Fabius has the position of honour at the end because he symbolizes Rome's survival against Hannibal, the greatest of all her enemies, and he exorcizes the memory of Dido's 'exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor'. His achievement is described in the well-known phrases of Ennius,²⁶ a quotation which deepens and completes the sense of antiquity and tradition which characterizes the whole passage.

Now Anchises sums up Rome's mission in seven famous lines:

excudent alii spirantia mollius aera
(credo equidem), uiuos ducent de marmore uultus,
orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus
describent radio et surgentia sidera dicent:
tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
(hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem,
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos. (847-53)

The Greeks are not named, so obvious is it that they are the people whose intellectual and artistic achievements are described in the first four lines; their contribution to the Greco-Roman culture of the time of Augustus is admitted to be supreme in sculpture, oratory, and astronomy. It is interesting to set this passage against the words of Cicero at the beginning of the *Tusculan Disputations*. Looking back, he says 'the Greeks surpassed the Romans intellectually and in all branches of literature' ('doctrina Graecia nos et omni litterarum genere superabant'; he adds that this was because 'we weren't trying', 'in quo erat facile uincere non repugnantes'), 'and in music, painting, geometry, and mathematics. The Romans have been superior in practical and ethical qualities' (*mores, instituta uitae, leges, res militaris, grauitas, constantia, magnitudo animi, probitas, fides*, 'ethical character, institutions of life, laws, military achievements, dignity, fortitude, greatness of spirit,

²⁶ Quoted by Cicero (*Off.* 1. 84 and *Sen.* 10) and by Livy (30. 26. 9). Servius wisely says 'sciens quasi pro exemplo hunc uersum posuit'.

integrity, loyalty'). But of oratory (which Virgil has singled out to concede to the Greeks) Cicero makes an exception—'we have had such great orators that we yielded hardly at all, if at all, to the Greeks' ('ut non multum aut nihil omnino Graecis cederetur'). Whether Cicero was including himself or not—he does not actually mention himself, the words are 'inde ita magnos nostram ad aetatem'—there is some truth in his claim, and oratory is the branch of literature which comes closest to the arts of government and law at which the Romans claimed to be outstanding. Nevertheless, Virgil concedes literature, along with the fine arts, symbolized by sculpture, and the theoretical sciences, symbolized by astronomy; and against these arts he sets the Roman achievements, using the word *artes* of his own countrymen to denote a different contribution to civilized life which may balance, or indeed outweigh, the others. The Roman 'arts' will be those of government and empire, of conquest and just rule, of settled organization (*morem*) and peace. *Pacique imponere morem*: 'to add to peace a settled way of life'. The old reading here, *pacisque imponere morem*, 'to impose the habit of peace', must now be finally discarded, partly because there are parallels for this moral meaning of the singular of *mos*,²⁷ and partly because the last prop of the reading *pacis*, the alleged support of Servius, has been knocked away by Professor E. Fraenkel, who has shown that Servius' comment does not after all imply that he read *pacis*.²⁸ *Pax* then and *mos*; the nature of the mission both of Aeneas and of the Roman people is here presented very clearly in its bipartite form. The first task is to conquer in war, and the second to establish a peace in which the people are ruled with mercy and given the benefits of Roman civilization and settled ways of life. Here is the concept—no doubt imperfectly realized, but very real always in Roman thought—which could lead Claudian four centuries later to write of Rome: 'This is the only nation which has received conquered people in her embrace, and protected the human race under a common name like a mother not a tyrant, has called those whom she defeated her citizens, and has united the distant parts of the world in a bond of affection for her':

haec est in gremium uictos quae sola recepit,
humanumque genus communi nomine fouit
matris non dominae ritu, ciuesque uocauit
quos domuit nexuque pio longinqua reuinxit

(*De Consolatu Stilichonis*, 3. 150-3)

²⁷ e.g. *Aen.* 8. 316, 'quis neque mos neque cultus erat'.

²⁸ *Museum Helveticum* 19 (1962), 133.

Anchises' description of the aims and ideals of Augustan Rome summarizes and seemingly concludes the pageant, but there follows, as a sort of pendant (*haec mirantibus addit*), a passage of tribute, a sort of funeral panegyric, for the young Marcellus, a possible successor to Augustus, who died at the age of eighteen in 23 BC. The note of sorrow is introduced at a most triumphant part of the poem, just as at the end of Book 11 at the moment when Aeneas completes his mission we are made to think not of the mission but of the death of his courageous adversary:

ast illi soluuntur frigore membra
uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras. (12. 951-2)

Success and failure, life and death, triumph and defeat, joy and sorrow; this is the equipoise of the *Aeneid*.

The book now ends quickly, without further detail and with no scenes of farewell. Anchises tells Aeneas what he must do in Italy, fires his mind with a passion for the glory which awaits him, and sends him back to earth by the ivory gate. There is a long literary tradition of the twin gates of sleep, horn for true shades and ivory for false, and their significance in Virgil has been much discussed.²⁹ At the simplest we may say that Virgil uses the traditional imagery solely to construct a closing scene, to provide a method of exit as the cave at Avernus was the method of entry; and that Aeneas goes out by the ivory gate because he is not a true shade. But most readers will feel that more is meant, perhaps that Aeneas leaves the Underworld having learned much but not all, perhaps that the religious revelation is dim and groping, based on hope not faith, far indeed from the gloom and tenuous ghosts of Homer, but far too from the certainty of religious conviction upon which Milton's *Paradise Lost* is built; perhaps above all that it has been in a sense the dream of Aeneas, personal to himself. He has journeyed again through his past, and learned to look forwards not backwards, and has seen something of the future. In his journey towards Elysium he moved in the gloom of a Homeric afterlife; with his father in Elysium he saw dimly a new kind of world-order, both spiritual and temporal. That is why the two parts of his experience in the Underworld are different and even in some ways contradictory: he moves from one to the other.

Let us begin with Homer, Quintilian said, and most certainly the *Aeneid* takes its origin from the vivid pictures of human life and activity

²⁹ For a first-rate brief summary of views and an excellent conclusion see Brooks Otis, *op. cit.* 173 ff.

which Virgil loved to read about in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, with which his narrative is chronologically contemporary. But this is the life which Aeneas must leave behind in order to be the pioneer of a new kind of civilization. At the beginning of the *Aeneid* we see him again and again in the situation of Odysseus, but with a different task before him. Odysseus returns to the old life, but Aeneas must journey out into the new; he must learn to move from the Homeric world into a complex Roman world of new values and social responsibilities, in accordance with a still imperfectly understood divine destiny. And so here in Book 6, at the centre of the poem, he takes his final leave of the Trojan and Homeric past and turns towards the Roman future.