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ALLEGORY IN THE AENEID<sup>1</sup>

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The part played by allegory in some of Vergil's *Bucolics* is well known, even if there has been a certain amount of controversy about its interpretation. One thing we can certainly infer from the *Bucolics*, that allegory was dear to Vergil. In this essay some attempts are made to establish how far Vergil made use of allegory in the *Aeneid*.

Already before the close of the Classical Age the tradition of an allegorical interpretation of the Vergilian epic had taken shape. Witnesses of that are Donatus, Servius and Macrobius, in the fourth century. In particular, Donatus thought that Vergil in writing his poems followed an order similar to the development of man's life which is first pastoral, then agricultural and lastly warlike. Hence, the *Bucolics*, the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*<sup>2</sup>. Servius held that Vergil praises Augustus by exploiting the

<sup>1</sup> BIBLIOGRAPHY: The following works might be profitably consulted: Brignoli, F.M., 'La porta d'avorio', nel libro VI dell'*Eneide*, *Giornale Italiano di Filologia*, VII, 1954; Brooks, R.A., 'Discolor: Aura. Reflections on the Golden Bough', *American Journal of Philology*, LXXIV, 1953, 260-80; Comparetti, D., *Virgilio nel Medio Evo*, Firenze, 1937; Corfmacher, W.Ch., 'Vergil, spokesman for the Augustan reforms', *Classical Journal*, LI, 1956, 329-34; Crutwell, R.W., 'Vergil's mind at work', an analysis of the *Symbolism of the Aeneid*, Oxford, 1947; de Grassi, A., 'Vergil and the forum of Augustus', *Epigraphica*, VII, 1945, 88; Demimuid, *De Bernardo Carnotensi grammatico et Professore et Vergili interprete*, Paris, 1873; Donatus, Tiberius Claudius, *Commentary on the Aeneid*, ed. Reifferscheid, 1860; Drew, D.L., *The Allegory of the Aeneid*, Oxford, 1937; Fulgentius, Fabius Planciades, *Liber Expositione Virgilianae Continentiae*, ed. Bunte, Bremen, 1852; Gargiulo, C., *La religiosità di Virgilio nella figura di Enea*, Messina, 1950; Haerhoff, T.J., *The Gates of Sleep*, Greece & Rome, XVII, 1948, p. 89; Kerényi, K., *The Golden Bough*, Heames, 1931, 413; Mackay, L.A., 'Three levels in meaning in Aeneid VI', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, LXXXVI, 1955, 180-9; Macrobius, Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius, *Saturnalium Convitiatorum Liber VII*, books 3-6, ed. Eyssenhardt, Lips, 1868; Poeschi, V., *Die Dichtkunst Virgils. Bild und Symbolik in der Aeneis*, Wein, 1949; Rowell, H.T., 'Vergil and the Forum of Augustus', *American Journal of Philology*, 1939, 288; Sapojnikoff, V., 'Vergil's hero is the great Imperium Romanum', *Rev. Phil.*, 1932, 56; Servius, *Servi Grammatici qui feruntur in V. Carmina commentarii*, ed. G. Thilo and H. Hagen, 3 vols, 1881-7; Tenny, Frank, 'The pageant of heroes in Aeneid VI', *American Journal of Philology*, 1938, 227; Verral, M., 'Symbolism in Vergil', *The Classical Review*, March, 1910; Ward, Fowler, *Gathering of The Clans* 1915; Woodworth, D.C., 'The marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia', in *Transactions and Proceeding of the American Association*, 1930, 175 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr Servius, proem, eclog.

achievements and works of Aeneas. In the Middle Ages the allegorical interpretation of the poem reached absurd proportions. Fulgentius, who wrote in the fifth or sixth century, in his *De Continentia Vergiliana*, builds up a most detailed allegorical picture interpreting each book in terms of the stages of man's life on earth.<sup>3</sup> Bernard of Chartres in his commentary to the first six books of the *Aeneid* holds that Vergil describes the fortunes of human life and what the soul does as long as it is temporarily enclosed in the body.<sup>4</sup> John of Salisbury considers the *Aeneid* as an allegory of all philosophical truth, and, like Fulgentius, considers the first six books of the *Aeneid* as an allegory of the vicissitudes of human life from infancy to old age.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars in our own times have revived the allegorical theory and have tried to detect symbolical interpretations in certain parts or passages of the *Aeneid*. But some of these interpretations read rather like guesswork and are hardly corroborated by any internal or external evidence. Others command more serious attention.

The allegory of the *Aeneid* is more subtle than that of the *Bucolics*, because it is less direct and, therefore, less apparent. In its broad lines it is consequent on the very purpose of the poem. Although Vergil had toyed with the idea of writing an epic since his young days when he was writing the *Bucolics*,<sup>6</sup> the actual suggestion to write the poem which we have come from higher quarters.<sup>7</sup> When Octavian definitely brought the whole Roman Empire under his rule after the battle of Actium, he meant to make his position as durable as he could make it. In Julius Caesar the idea of absolute autocracy, possibly of a monarchical shape, took some time to develop. But Octavian had the experiences of his grand-uncle to lead him, and from the very start he decided on a monarchy: a hereditary monarchy which, if it was not to be surrounded with the brilliance of an oriental court, was still to be no less absolute in its powers. Its support was to be two-fold: a strong and centralized army and popular favour. One of the means by which this popular favour was to be secured was propaganda. In this sense Octavian was perhaps a fore-runner of our own contemporary age. With that in view he gathered around him, through the agency of his home-minister Maecenas, most of the writers of the age, protected them, made them financially secure by bestowing land upon them, thus making sure that not only they would write nothing that ran counter to his auto-

<sup>3</sup> Cfr Comparetti I, 147 sqq., 135 sqq.; Van Staveren, 'De Continentia', in *Mythographi latini*, Lugd. Bat. 1742.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr Cousin, *Ourag.* inéd. d'Abelard, p. 283 sqq.

<sup>5</sup> Polycratic, VI, c. 22 (Migne 199, 621), and Polycratic II, c. 15 (Migne, 199, 430).

<sup>6</sup> Cfr Georg. III, 12-39; and *ibid.* 46-7.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr Servius, p. 70, 26 Br., *Postea ab Augusto Aeneidem propositam scripsit.*

cracy but also that they would positively support his policy whenever that was needed. Thus Horace wrote the first six odes of the third book, the so-called Roman odes, to foster the civic virtues which Augustus was trying to bring back to Roman life after the moral collapse of the last years of the republic; he wrote the fourth book of the odes almost as an afterthought, to enhance the prestige of the Emperor's adopted sons, and possibly, the rulers-designate of the Empire, after their victories in Southern Germany. The *Georgics* of Vergil were the result of a suggestion by Maecenas that a poem should be written endorsing and helping Augustus's policy of calling the Italians back to the land after the devastations of the long civil wars during which much of the once fruitful land of Italy had been deprived of cultivators and left derelict and abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

The *Aeneid*, I repeat, was also the result of a similar suggestion by the ruling powers. True to his propaganda drive to prop up his infant throne, Octavian wanted to idealize his person and his work. The very title of *Augustus*, assumed by a decree of the senate in 27, a title which really defies exact analysis, and which was meant to shed around Octavian an aureola of a higher greatness which not only distinguished him from Octavian the triumvir and the military despot, but commended him to gods as well as men, indicates that he wanted to appear in the eyes of his subjects as the god-sent, the one about whom the gods had planned a special providence, one who had become something almost bordering on the divine. Hence the divine cult which Augustus organized for his person throughout Italy and the Empire.

The help of the poet who had already helped so ably the agricultural policy of the regime by his stupendous *Georgics* would have an incalculable propaganda value. Hence the *Aeneid*, which, in this sense, may well be considered in the nature of a political pamphlet.

The person of Augustus and the Rome of Augustus were to be presented to Rome, to Italy and to the Empire in the idealized light of poetry which would capture the imagination of the multitude and make of the heroes (Augustus and Rome) household names of national import. The subject was not an easy one: it has never been easy to turn contemporary politics into poetry, and we know that it took Vergil some time to find an appropriate background on which to build his theme. Augustus, in spite of his titles and his present work for Rome, in spite of the *pax augustea* he had ultimately achieved, was still for many, indeed for the thinking many of Rome, the Octavian who in 43 had used to his own private advantage the legions given to him by the senate, allying himself with Mark Antony, the arch-enemy of the senate; he was still the triumvir who had signed the

<sup>8</sup> Cfr Georg. III, 41.

wholesale political proscriptions which followed and which sent to their doom hundreds who, like Cicero, had merited well of the republic; he was still the Octavian who had filled the senate with his own nominees, rendered the magistracies a mere shadow, monopolised the military machine of the whole Empire, and set up the strictest military autocracy the Roman people had ever experienced. That, of course, besides the personal short-comings, both of a private and public order, which were well known to both friends and foes. At Philippi, where he was fighting against Brutus and Cassius, his own wing had been worsted and it was Antony's generalship that had secured the final victory over the enemy. His ultimate victory over Sextus Pompeius and his defeat of Antony at Actium were all due to the brilliant generalship of his admiral Agrippa, not to mention other instances. Hence it was rather difficult to turn the blood-stained hands of the scheming, hypocritical, autocratic Octavian into the pious hands that must achieve the god-planned victories of an epic poem of national import. But if Augustus could hardly be idealized in flesh and blood, that process might be achieved through a symbol, and Vergil wisely went back to a legendary and half-mythical age and therefrom chose a personality on which he might work as a symbol of the real Augustus, so that the halo of semi-divine greatness proper to the symbol might enhance, as required, the prestige of Augustus by overshadowing him with the resulting majesty which the brilliant colours of the symbol engendered.

The subtle meaning of the *Aeneid*, therefore, is that of an allegory borrowing colours from a distant imaginary past and bearing on the present with an almost mystical suggestiveness. As Augustus had rescued the Roman people from the blood-stained wreckage of the fifty years of civil strife and warfare and had guaranteed a new lease of life to Rome by the establishment of the imperial autocracy, thus making it possible that after the irrevocable extinction of the republic Rome should continue with its mission for civilization and order, so Aeneas, of whom Augustus is a direct descendant, leads his people from the wreckage of Troy after the irrevocable fall of the city to a new lease of life by founding for them a new city which will guarantee the perpetuation of the Trojans' work, namely, that of giving rise, in conjunction with the native Latins, to the great glory that was to be Rome. As Augustus is linked with Aeneas by the material ties of blood and kinship and by the moral ones of leadership, so Rome is linked up with Troy by the material transportation from one city to the other of Troy's *penates* and Troy's sacred fire, as related in Book II, and the pre-eminence of Troy in the East, materially shown both by the stand against the united effort of the whole of Greece for ten years, and by the fact that it merited to be sung by the greatest poet of

antiquity, Homer, is balanced by the pre-eminence of Rome in the ages to come in Italy, in the Mediterranean and in the whole civilized world.

This link between Aeneas and Augustus may be seen in various ways. In Book VIII, while both sides, Trojans and Latins, are preparing for the coming clash, Venus gets from Vulcan for Aeneas a suit of armour the most conspicuous part of which is a shield embossed with pictures (panels) representing the milestones of future Roman greatness. As the shield is to be the sure protection of Aeneas against his foe, so it represents the greatness of Roman history towards which the safety of Aeneas is directed:

Illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos,  
 haud vatum ignarus venturique inscius aevi,  
 fecerat Ignipotens; (VIII, 626)

and later Aeneas, having on his shoulder this shield, is unknowingly carrying the whole fame and fate of his glorious descendants:

attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum. (VIII, 731)

It contained, on one side, a picture of the wolf nursing Romulus and Remus, next, the rape of the Sabine women, the corpse of Mettius of Alba drawn by Tullus Hostilius, Porsenna besieging Rome with Horatius defending the bridge and Cloelia escaping, Manlius defending the Capitol, the Salii and the Luperci dancing at the sacrifice, Catiline going into Tartarus, and Cato acting as the judge of the departed. All these panels are embossed around a scene which occupies the centre of the shield and which depicts in four parts the victory of Actium and the triumph of Augustus after it. On one side there is depicted the actual battle, with Augustus directing his troops from his flagship, accompanied by the senate, the people, the *penates* and the great gods of Rome; next to it is represented the battle between the Egyptian and Roman gods; and on the other side the flight of Cleopatra and the triumph of Augustus. This triumph is dwelt upon in great detail:

at Caesar, triplici invecus Romana triumpho  
 moenia, dis Italis, votum inmortale, sacrabat,  
 maxima ter centum totam delubra per Urbem.  
 laetitia ludisque viae plausuque fremebant;  
 omnibus in templis matrum chorus, omnibus arae;  
 ante aras terram caesi stravere iuveni,  
 ipse sedens niveo candentis limine Phoebi  
 dona recognoscit populorum aptatque superbis,  
 postibus; incedunt victae longo ordine gentes,

quam variae linguis, habitu tam vestis et armis.  
 hic Nomandum genus et discinctos Mulciber Afros,  
 hic Lelegas Carasque sagittiferosque Gelonos  
 finxerat; Euphrates ibat iam mollior undis;  
 extremique hominum Morini, Rhenusque bicornis;  
 indomitique Dahae et pontem indignatus Araxes. (VIII, 714)

The central position occupied by the group of four pictures dealing with the battle of Actium and its consequent triumph makes it clear that Augustus is considered as the core towards which is directed the whole course of Roman history fashioned by the achievements of so many great Romans. All these, and especially Augustus, are descendants of Aeneas:

famamque et fata nepotum

The decisive victory of Actium made Octavian supreme and is definitely the culmination of the events which led to the establishment of the Empire under Augustus.

The burning flame which appears on the head of Julius in Book II, 683 and the star which in the same portent flashes across the sky (ib. 694) are the same Julian star which is depicted on the forehead of Augustus in Vulcan's shield, thereby showing that Augustus is the one among Aeneas's descendants who shall one day fulfil the destiny set in motion by Aeneas in bringing the Trojans to Italy and in thus being responsible, through Julius and the Alban kings, for the foundation of Rome.

On his return from the victory of Actium Augustus built, in honour of Apollo and in fulfilment of a vow made during the battle, a magnificent temple on the Palatine and reinstated the Ludi Apollinares which, first celebrated at the time of the battle of Cannae, had fallen into disuse. Augustus also celebrated in honour of Apollo and Diana the Ludi Saeculares. In the temple of Apollo on the Palatine he placed the revised edition of the Sybilline oracles and set up a new college of priests to keep them in custody and interpret them.

Now, all that is poetically imagined by Vergil to be done in fulfilment of a vow made by Aeneas to the Sybil in Book VI. In the beginning of Book VI, where Aeneas goes to the Sybil and asks her to unfold to him his future, known to her by her prophetic powers, he promises in return to build to the god of prophecy, her inspirer, a temple, to institute new games in his honour and to set up in her particular honour a new college of priests:

tum Phoebos et Triviae solido de marmore templum  
 instituum, festosque dies de nomine Phoebi.  
 te quoque magna manent regnis penetralia nostris;

hic ego namque tuas sortes arcanaque fata,  
 dicta meae genti, ponam lectosque sacro,  
 alma, viros.

(VI, 69)

That promise Aeneas fulfils in the person of his descendant Augustus.

The deification of Augustus is foreshadowed in the promise of deification which is repeatedly made to Aeneas in the poem. Thus in the promise of Jove to Venus in I, 259:

sublimemque feres ad sidera caeli  
 magnanimum Aenean.

So also in VI, 789:

hic Caesar, et omnis Iuli  
 progenies, magnum caeli ventura sub axem;

and in XII, 794:

indigetem Aenean scis ipsa, et scire fateris,  
 deberi caelo, fatisque ad sidera tolli.

The drive made by Augustus to reinstate morals and religion in Rome is well known. The collapse of private and public morality in the last hundred years of the republic, which Sallust depicts so vividly in the introductory paragraphs to his *Catilinarian War*, made any new social order impossible, and Augustus saw clearly that any new fabric had to have in the first instance a sound moral basis. Hence his social legislation to foster marriage, to combat childless marriages, to punish adultery, and the example he himself set of putting his own house in order, punishing by exile his own and only daughter Julia and his grand-daughter, Julia the second. Hence also his drive to renovate the state religion, to revive the *pax deorum* of an earlier age and to re-establish the former serene belief in the state-protecting deities of Rome. Hence his systematic repair of disused temples, which he undertook in 20 B.C.; his resuscitation of many half-forgotten ceremonies; his careful supervision of the worship of Vesta; his revival of the cult of Dea Dia by the obsolescent college of the Arval Brotherhood; his reappointment of a flamen Dialis; and his celebration of the Ludi Saeculares.

Now, that drive for religion is foreshadowed in the *pietas* of Aeneas. Vergil repeatedly reminds us that his hero is *pious*, 'pious Aeneas.' In Book II when the penates of Troy are to be rescued from the conflagration of the city, they are consigned by the ghost of Hector to Aeneas who is told that he is to be their custodian until he can build a new city for them.

He leaves Troy, gathers the Trojan refugees at Anthandros and leads them through the perils of a long sea journey in search of a distant new home in pursuance of a mission imposed upon him by the gods. It is the gods he continually consults, at Delphi, at the famous oracle, in Crete in his dream, in Chaonia through the prophet Helenus, at Cumae through the Sybil. In obedience to the gods' commands he gives up a comfortable home at Eryx in Sicily (where, in Book V, he is invited to stay by King Acestes) and a princely welcome by Dido in Carthage. His prayers to the oracle at Delphi (Book III) and to the Sybil of Cumae (Book VI) reveal his intensely religious mind.

Parallel to his piety towards the gods is Aeneas's piety towards his fatherland, his father Anchises, his son Julius, and his people. It is to find a new home for his people and thereby to renew, as it were, his fatherland that he goes through so much toil:

multum ille et terris iactatus ab alto  
vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,  
multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem  
inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum  
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae. (I, 3)

multosque per annos  
errabant acti fati maria omnia circum,  
Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem. (I, 31)

magnas obeuntia terras  
tot maria intravi duce te penitusque repostas  
Massylum gentes, praetentaque Syrtibus arva. (VI, 58)

It is to establish this new home for Julius and his people that he has to fight a stiff war on his landing in Italy. So the Sybil foretells:

Bella, horrida bella,  
et Thybrim multo spumantem sanguine cerno.  
non Simois tibi nec Xanthus nec Dorica castra  
defuerint; alius Latio iam partus Achilles,  
natus et ipse dea; nec Teucris addita Iuno  
usquam aberit. (VI, 86)

His father Anchises along with his son Julius he carries through the conflagration of Troy to safety: as long as Anchises lives it is his advice that Aeneas continually seeks; in Book V he celebrates funeral games in his honour, and in Book VI he goes through the harrowing experience of going down to the underworld to visit his father.

Aeneas's prowess in war, amply shown in Book II, in the night of the fall of Troy, and in Books X, XI and XII in the fighting against the Latins and Turnus, foreshadows the martial qualities which Augustus expected the Empire to see in him. The leadership of Aeneas of his people has its counterpart in Augustus's imperial leadership of Rome. It is hardly an overstatement to assert that the whole of Roman history centres around Augustus. The republic which Cicero tried hard to save was beyond remedy. The attempts to patch up the old republican institutions had all ended in civil strife and political chaos. It was Augustus who, with his strong but gentle autocracy, reinstated the authority of a central administration and made it possible for Rome's *imperium* to continue to dominate over Western Europe and the shores of the Mediterranean for full five hundred years. He set his mark on Rome's army; he definitely stabilized the frontiers on the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and the Sahara; he re-shaped Rome's civil administration; he covered Rome with the splendour of marble and gold; he embarked upon and finished many ambitious schemes of public works throughout Italy; he created an efficient civil service which could control and protect life and property not only in Rome but throughout the whole Empire; and he inspired in a new and very thorough manner Rome's verse and prose writers, so that his very name overshadowed his age and gave it a new meaning.

All this we find suggested in the latter half of Book VI. As in the shield of Aeneas Augustus occupies the central and the most prominent part, so here, in Book VI, in the review of Rome's future heroes, Augustus's personality stands quite apart and towers above all the others with his mighty personality and far-reaching achievements:

Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,  
Augustus Caesar, Divi genus, aurea condet  
saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per arva  
Saturno quondam. (VI, 791)

Rome itself with its history and its great Mission among the nations has its great share of the symbolism of the *Aeneid*. Its universal rule and civilizing mission is clearly forecast in Book VI, 851:

tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento -  
haec tibi erunt artes - pacique imponere morem,  
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos. (VI, 851)

But, in addition to that, particular parts of the *Aeneid* recall special instances of Roman history, giving in that way to the book itself a special national significance of its own. Book IV is certainly episodic in character,

for the events related in it have hardly any repercussion on the course of Aeneas's doings: they only introduce a romantic element of Alexandrine type which in the mighty hands of Vergil becomes one of the best pages of the literature of all time. But Dido's story is not just that. There is hardly any doubt that the story of Dido as a whole is symbolical. I do not endorse the opinion of those who see in Dido a symbol of Cleopatra.<sup>9</sup> Dido's genuine love for Aeneas and her pangs at his desertion can hardly stand for the wiles of the Egyptian queen who tried her arts with varied success on Caesar and Antony first and then, with failure, on Augustus. The unmistakable sympathy of Vergil for the Carthaginian queen could hardly be his feelings for the Egyptian seducer. Dido's prayer in Book IV, 622 sqq. rather links up her story with one of the most crucial and decisive episodes of Rome's history. As in the Punic Wars, and particularly in the second one, Rome's advance towards Mediterranean and world domination was very nearly cut short by Hannibal's Carthage, and it needed all the strength of Rome's character and resources to weather the storm and save Rome's civilizing influence for all time, so Aeneas's course towards Italy where he is destined to give rise to the greatness for which Rome stands runs a very serious danger of being cut short by his stay in Carthage and his marriage with Dido; and Aeneas needs all his strength of character to shake himself off from the ties which would have absorbed his Trojans into the Carthaginian people and city. The intimate relation between the episode of Dido and the Carthaginian Wars is clearly indicated in the lines in which Vergil makes these wars the result of the curse of the dying Dido:

Tum vos, o Tyrii, stirpem et genus omne futurum  
 exercete odiis, cinerique haec mittite nostro  
 munera. nullus amor populis, nec foedera sunt.  
 exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor,  
 qui face Dardanio ferroque sequare colonos,  
 nunc, olim, quocumque dabunt se tempore vires.  
 litora litoribus contraria, fluctibus undas,  
 imprecor, arma armis; pugnent ipsique nepotesque. (IV, 622)

The welcome extended to Aeneas and his Trojans in Book V by King Acestes as well as the settlement left behind by Aeneas at Acesta (later Segesta) and the temple built also by Aeneas in honour of Venus on Mount Eryx are symbolical of the friendship of the city of Eryx with Rome in the First Punic War and of the favourable terms of alliance which the Romans gave to the city of Segesta in 263 B. C.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr later, D. L. Drew, Note 16.

The second part of the poem in its general motive recalls the first part of the history of the Republic. When the kings were driven out the republic had to fight, first for its very existence against the Etruscans of Porsenna, and afterwards against the Latin League. After the battle of Lake Regillus the period of consolidation was over and Rome little by little started on its career of conquest, fighting practically continuous wars against the Latins, Volsci, Rutuli, Marsi, Equi. After the conquest of Latium Rome's attention was turned to Etruria, and when that part of Italy was annexed, there followed the conquest of Samnium in three long wars, until the whole of the peninsula fell under the hegemony of Rome. The only allies which Rome, at times, found in this continuous war of conquest were the Greek cities of Campania. The result of this conquest was not the extermination of the conquered Italians but their incorporation in a huge federation, mostly in the way of *amici et socii*. This integration of all these peoples, some of them, like the Oscans and Greeks of the South, of different ethnical character from the Latins, became so complete that by the end of the republic the Italians were sharing on a completely equal footing the benefits of Rome's victories abroad and the glamour of Rome's honours at home in the administration of the capital. In the last half century of the republic Marius and Cicero coming from the Volscian town of Arpinum, Pompey from Picenum, Catullus and Vergil from Cisalpine Gaul, felt that they were as Roman as Caesar or Brutus who were natives of the capital.

Now the alignment of forces for or against Aeneas in the last six books of the *Aeneid* reflects all that. While the allies of Aeneas are the Greeks of Evander, the coalition against him represents, broadly, the peoples Rome had to fight against first to assert and to consolidate itself as a republic and then to bring a unified and federated Italy under her rule: Turnus represents the Rutuli; Catilus and Coras come from Tibur; Caeculus comes with the forces of Praeneste, Gabii, and of the Hernici; Ufens, with the Aequiculi of Latium; Clausus, with the Sabines; Umbo represents the Marsi; Camilla, the Volsci; Mezentius, the Etruscans; and Halaesus, the Samnites and Oscans.

All these in vain do their best to frustrate what Aeneas had set out to achieve, as all these peoples, each in their own time and circumstances, had in vain tried to stem the advance of Rome. But, reading the battle books in the latter part of the *Aeneid*, especially Books X and XI, one feels that Vergil is all the time in full sympathy with the Italian heroes who valiantly struggle in vain against the Trojans. Their valour gets its due meed of praise, and although the heroes themselves are vanquished their prowess is fully recognized. This is particularly the case of Turnus

In the attack on the Trojan camp in Book IX Turnus wreaks as much slaughter as ever Aeneas does, and in the single combat with Aeneas in Book XII one feels that he is doomed not because he is inferior to Aeneas but because so the gods decreed, to make it possible for Aeneas to achieve the purpose for which he had come from Troy to Italy. It is clear that Vergil wants to give the impression that once the war is over and once the Trojans will have joined themselves as one people with their former foes they will go hand in hand to ensure the national destiny which awaits jointly Rome and the romanized peoples of Italy in their conquest of the Mediterranean.

The victory of Aeneas will not have as its result the extermination of the conquered but only a federation of conquerors and conquered, on a perfectly equal footing, for the achievement of a common destiny. These are the very words of Aeneas in Book XII, 187:

sin nostrum aduerit nobis Victoria Martem, —  
ut potius reor, et potius di numine firment —  
non ego nec Teucris Italos parere iubebo,  
nec mihi regna peto; paribus se legibus ambae  
invictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant,

And, further on, in the same book, in line 827, Juno's prayer, granted by Jove, is:

sit Romana potens Itala virtute propago.

Another point where a symbol might be sought is the veneration in which a number of places on or around the Palatine or the Aventine are held by Evander. When in Book VIII Evander welcomes Aeneas and his group of Trojans he first invites them to partake in the festival which they are celebrating in honour of Hercules near the cave of the Lupercal; and afterwards he takes them to see a number of places which he and his people hold in particular veneration. Now these very places, almost hallowed by ancient legendary associations, were held in particular veneration in Rome in Augustus's own day. One feels that the veneration in which they are held by Evander is symbolical of the veneration in which they were held by the Roman people in Vergil's own time. The very festival which Evander was holding in honour of Hercules when the Trojans arrived (Book VII) should symbolize the cult with which the Romans honoured that god in their two temples, the one in the Forum Boarium (between the Circus Maximus and the Tiber) and the other near the Porta Trigemina (on the Tiber, further on towards the Aventine).

Evander shows Aeneas the Ara Carmentalis and near it the Porta Carmentalis

between the Capitol and the Tiber, so called after the nymph Carmentalis, mother of Evander. This nymph was supposed to have prophesied the glorious future of Aeneas's descendants. Next he shows him the grove on the Capitol which according to the legend Romulus later on turned into an asylum for runaways from the neighbouring towns who wished to settle in Rome. In the time of Augustus the grove was still there and still retained its hallowed associations through its neighbouring temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and that of Juno. At the foot of the Palatine there was the Lupercal or grotto where the she-wolf is supposed to have nursed the baby twins Romulus and Remus. It was the centre of a great celebration held on the 15th of February in historical times. Then Evander shows him the Argiletum, a place between the Capitol and the Aventine where Evander is supposed to have buried Argillus, a guest from Argos. He shows him the Tarpeian rock of which Evander's people even then feel scared, and the Capitol which is thought to be already hallowed by the presence of the divinity of the supreme god, thereby symbolizing the selection of the Capitol by the Romans for the building of their principal temple, namely, that of Jupiter Capitolinus.

The historical associations, then, and the religious veneration in which Vergil makes these places to be held by Evander and his people are a symbol of the historical or religious associations attributed to these same places in Vergil's own day.

The unity of the Empire under Augustus is symbolized by the fact that, as we are told in Book III, in their journey the Trojans leave behind them, in some places which they visit, Trojan settlements. Thus they leave a settlement in Thrace, another in Crete, and yet another at Eryx in Sicily. The very names given to places on the Italian coast after deceased companions of Aeneas, such as the promontories of Palinurus, Misenus, and Caieta, serve to stress the link that the South of Italy has with Aeneas and hence with Rome and to symbolize the intimate national union which, effected as a result of the Social War, was at the time of Augustus a reality. In this sense the *Aeneid* was meant to be a national poem with an appeal not only to Rome but to the whole of Italy: the intimate association of these places with the voyage of Aeneas should symbolize this broad nationalism.

Some of the points made by scholars of our own time call for a special mention. Some are ingenious enough but their lack of internal or external proof hardly compels assent. Such is Woodworth's suggestion<sup>10</sup> that the

<sup>10</sup> Cfr Bibliography Note I.

marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia has a dynastic significance connected with the marriage of Augustus. Such is the symbolism which M. Verral<sup>10</sup> thinks she sees in VI, 14-33 and VI, 707-9. Such also is R. A. Brook's opinion<sup>10</sup> that the golden bough of Book VI is a symbol of death in life. Not much different is the position of C. Gargiulo,<sup>10</sup> who sees in the pietas of Aeneas a symbol of the piety of Vergil himself; and of Tenny Frank<sup>10</sup> who thinks that Vergil's pageant of heroes in Book VI was inspired by the same enthusiasm as led Augustus to create a portrait gallery of ancient worthies in the Forum.

Particularly remarkable are the points which D. L. Drew<sup>10</sup> makes. Some of them, it is true, may be somewhat far-fetched, but others seem quite appropriate. He seems to be working mostly on his imagination when he considers the storm in Book I as a parallel to the naval disasters suffered by Augustus near Sicily through defeat and storm, in 38-36 B.C.;<sup>11</sup> or when he considers the behaviour of Aeneas in the slaughter of Book II as a symbol of the revengeful conduct of Octavian after the murder of Julius Caesar (44-39 B.C.);<sup>12</sup> or when he takes the revolt of the women in Book V as an allegory of the revolt of the veterans in 30 B.C.;<sup>13</sup> or when he considers the visions of Aeneas, and particularly the one of Tiberinus in Book VIII, as symbolizing those which Augustus, according to Dio Cassius (53, 20) had the night after he was given the title of Augustus;<sup>14</sup> or when the visit of Aeneas and Achates to the Sybil in Book III is taken to symbolize the visit which Augustus and Agrippa made to the mathematician Theogenis of Apollonia.<sup>15</sup>

Again, one feels that while the parallelism between Aeneas and Augustus is admitted, it is too much to see a Roman counterpart of the Age of Augustus in all the secondary heroes of the *Aeneid*, making Achates the symbol of Agrippa, Mnaestheus of Maecenas, Turnus of Antony, Mezentius of Sextus Pompeius, Lavinia of Drusilla, Dido of Cleopatra or Scribonia.<sup>16</sup> Of the Dido-Cleopatra allegory we have already spoken. Preposterous, indeed, is the contention that the main object of Book IV is to illustrate a besetting weakness of Augustus, his amorousness, and at the same time to illustrate the strength of mind shown by the emperor in overcoming that weakness at the call of public duty.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bibliography Note I.

<sup>11</sup> D. L. Drew, pp. 67 sqq.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 62 sqq.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 73

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 60 and p. 80

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 87

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 83-9

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 83

On the other hand, it is hard to reject the allegory Drew notices in Books V and VIII. In Book V the ritual followed by Aeneas (77-80) in paying observance to Anchises's shades would reproduce the custom of the Roman Parentalia-Feralia held in February 13-21. The arrow which is shot by Acestes and which bursts into flame and vanishes like a comet in the sky (522-8) may well symbolize the comet which appeared in 44 B.C. (July 20-30) when Octavian was holding games in honour of Julius Caesar. Aeneas pays the annual homage to his parent's Manes as Augustus pays the annual homage to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, on July 12; and the games themselves, as described in Book V have a number of points of similarity with those celebrated by Augustus in 29 B.C.<sup>18</sup>

So also in Book VIII. It is hard to resist the assent that the rite in honour of Hercules is a symbol of the sacrifice performed in honour of Hercules Magnus Custos at the Ara Maxima in Augustus's own time.<sup>19</sup> Again, the arrival of Aeneas outside the walls of Evander's city on the 12th August, i.e. after having received at Cumae a sure sign of his fated call to empire, and when Arcas was celebrating the rites of Hercules (102-4), reads certainly like an allegory of Augustus's arrival at Rome from Naples to celebrate his triple triumph in 29 B.C. Augustus was outside the walls of Rome on August 12, and while staying at Naples he had visited Capreae and there he had been heartened by a 'sign'.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Aeneas receives the shield of Vulcan as Augustus received in January 27 B.C. the golden *clupeus* which was placed in the Curia Julia.<sup>21</sup> The four groups of scenes on the shield (628-34; 635-41; 642-51; 652-70) correspond to the four virtues of Augustus, i.e. *virtus*, *clementia*, *iustitia*, *pietas*, and, at the same time, they portray the history of Rome as a progress of valour, clemency, justice and piety.<sup>22</sup>

It is impossible to do justice, here, to R. W. Crutwell. We may just state that some of the symbolism he detects like that resulting from the powerful emotive links between Bovillae and Julus, and Almo and Cybele; that contained in the Dolphin passage; like the parallelism between Aeneas and Hercules; the parallelism between Aeneas's visit to the underworld and that of Theseus through the Labyrinth; like the parallelism resulting from the references to Vulcan and Vesta in Book II, is rather convincing. But then the whole book, based as it is on the axial symbolism between Troy and Rome, commands attention and should be read in its entirety.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp. 43 sqq.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 25 sqq.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp. 27 sqq.



So, one feels that the *Aeneid* is, broadly, an allegory. Under the superficial description of the toil of the Trojans to settle in Latium and the personality and achievements of Aeneas lies a deeper significance in terms of the foundation of the Republic and of the new lease of life which the tottering Republic received from Augustus by the mighty experiment of his imperial autocracy. In this sense, the name of *Gesta populi Romani* by which the *Aeneid* may have also been known, in the first instance, in ancient times<sup>23</sup> does not seem to be inappropriate to the full significance of the poem.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr Servius ad Aen. VI, 752, 'unde etiam in antiquis invenimus opus hoc appellatum esse non *Aeneidem* sed *Gesta populi Romani*, quod ideo mutatum est quia nomen non a parte sed a toto debet dari.'

## POETRY AND INSPIRATION

*Lecture delivered in the British Institute of Valletta, in 1954*

By J. AQUILINA

BEFORE I discuss the nature of poetry and the motive force behind it which we call 'inspiration', I beg you to enter with me the Poet's workshop where we can have a good look at his tools, which, when employed by him effectively in the odd moments of inspiration, create beauty of sound and feeling out of a fluid combination of verbal measures. The most important material on which the poet employs his sharpened tools is language, his own language that provides thousands of single words and word-combinations out of which he builds a significant poem for those that wish to escape from the drabness of daily life or enjoy vicariously thoughts and ideas that flashed through his mind but which they could not, and perhaps would not, express in appropriate language. Think of a few famous poems in English literature or in any other literature; try to recollect how the poems that are your favourites stand highest in your esteem precisely because, like amulets, they exercise a magical power on your imagination. Such are memorable poems that meet you half way by giving you the poet's own inspired power which awakens your own long pent-up emotions at the sight of something moving, exciting, something impressive, something the beauty of which lies far deeper down than the surface that carries the bare external lines of harmony, a young woman's face, for instance, joyous or mourning, a painted vase, sunset on your native hills, a blaze of morning fire spreading across the east or the west preceding sunrise or sunset with their manifold associations. Think of these poems and others nearer your heart and consider this: you have loved these poems because they met you half way. One day the sight of unexpected beauty in some form or other awoke emotions in your heart, set in motion disturbing associations, but when you attempted to translate such emotions into articulate language you felt helplessly inarticulate till you read your favourite poem that was a revelation of the inexpressible. Your favourite poems are your own soul's translations, your interpreters. Having made this wonderful discovery, you can now settle down comfortably in your armchair, read your favourite poem aloud to yourself and share the poet's vision to your heart's content. The poet has made you a present of a clear mirror to hold up to your own soul. He has helped you to discover your real self and to enjoy a language that is far beyond your verbal power of evocation.