GIRLHOOD

Like
the wild-
flower
where
the shepherd's
foot
treads
& leaves
its petalled
print

AETERNUM PER SAECULA NOMEN, THE GOLDEN BOUGH AND THE TRAGEDY OF HISTORY: PART I

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"THERE IS A PECULIARLY COMFORTING feeling experienced by a whole nation," wrote Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, "when somebody succeeds in calling up its history in a telling and sympathetic manner. It rejoices in the ancestral virtues, and smiles at the ancestral failings, as at things of the past. A work of this kind is bound to reap sympathetic applause, and so I was able to rejoice in a considerable success." Had Vergil lived as long as Goethe he might have explained the success of the *Aeneid* in terms similar to these reflections of his on the popularity of his early *Götz*. In Vergil's case, however, all we have is the vague and disturbing account of his deathbed wish to burn the manuscript. Though we have no way of knowing whether Vergil's misgivings lay with the style or the matter, or both,[1] we have come to doubt some of the traditional reasons for the popularity and greatness of the *Aeneid*.

Generations of schoolboys have been piously taught to read Vergil as the great celebrator of the glory of Rome, the confident exponent of Rome's proud advance from tribe to nation. Such interpretations may have fired the blood of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Americans and Englishmen stirred by the creation of the national empires going on before their eyes. But a generation which daily sees the continued existence of mankind threatened by the fact of nations and empire may have a sense of elements in the *Aeneid* less clearly visible to readers of half a century ago.

It would, of course, be a patent falsehood to deny the fervor of Vergil's hope in the Augustan empire. To one whose boyhood and early manhood had been ravaged by the seemingly endless violence of the civil wars, the promise of peace and order was among the intensest of wishes:

> di patrii, Indigetes, et Romule Vestaque mater,
> quae Tuscum Tiberim et Romana Palatia servas,
> hunc saltem everso iuvenem succurrere saeclo
> ne prohibete. satis iam pridem sanguine nostro
> Laomedonteae luimus periuria Troiae (*Georg.* 1.498–502).
>
> (Gods of our country, native gods [?], and Romulus
> and mother Vesta who keeps the Tuscan Tiber and

the Roman Palatine, prevent not this youth at
least from coming to aid our overturned age.
Enough have we long ago paid with our blood for
the perjuries of Laomedon's Troy).

But along with the abiding value of the promise of order, there is another side to the *Aeneid* of which interpreters in recent years have become increasingly aware: a pessimism about the cost of history, an acute sensitivity to the suffering of the individuals who participate in it. One need point only to the bitter and haunting last line, *vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignat asub umbras* (12.952: "And with a groan his life fled outraged to the shades below").[2]

This negative element—the source of Vergil's tragic sense—pervades the poem, more strongly than most earlier interpreters have admitted. And since the human value of the past exists largely in relation to the present which restores it to life, we are not "distorting" Vergil in exploring that aspect of his work any more than the nineteenth century did in stressing his confidence in the progress toward empire. It is rather that we have become responsive to a different and, it is hoped, wider range of Vergil's art. To neglect this aspect of the poem only results in a false and simplistic reading or, by reaction, a premature rejection of Vergil altogether, such as Graves' recent one-sided attack on Vergil, the "antipoet" (*Oxford Address on Poetry*, 1962). Graves' "antipoet," however, is not Vergil as we have him; he is perhaps the Vergil that was expounded to Graves in school, a *Vergilius dimidiatus*.

The problem of Vergil's sense of the tragedy of history rests heavily upon the Sixth Book. In structure and meaning it is the center of the poem; and, in its famous pageant of Roman history and its prophecy of the Golden Age to be brought by Augustus, it deals more explicitly than any other part of the poem with the thinly balanced ledger of history. But the Sixth Book also contains one of the most poignant statements in the poem about the value of the effort (719–21). In this tension between the epic celebration of the glory of the Roman achievement and the question of the suffering it entails lie both the difficulty and the greatness of the *Aeneid*.

I. The Mystery of the Golden Bough

"All whom we have seen agree herein, that in its subject matter and its ornaments no other book of the *Aeneid* so easily and fully holds the mind of the reader as this, the Sixth."[3] This judgment has often been confirmed in the nearly two centuries since Heyne wrote it. Modern poetics, however, diverge sharply from those of the eighteenth century in seeing the elements of the Book (and of the whole poem) not as isolated, detachable "ornaments," but as

organic parts of a closely interwoven tissue of related images and symbols, as the stuff of what T. S. Eliot has called the "musical design" of a poem.

Chief among these elements is the Golden Bough. Modern scholars have pursued it with more ardor than did Aeneas himself, and with less success.[4] It will be argued in this and my subsequent essay) that the Bough is essential to the unity and meaning of VI, that in its symbolism the tragic losses incurred in the fulfillment of history are juxtaposed with the reward of immortality which history can confer. This tragic juxtaposition will be seen to draw together the major figures in the Book: Daedalus, Misenus, Palinurus, Marcellus, Caieta in VII. They, as mortals, pay the price for what the Bough and its bearer have by divine dispensation.

Already in Servius' time the Bough was a subject of learned speculations and numerous conjectures. These fall into two categories which may be labelled the "mythic" and the "philosophical" or, in slightly different terms, the "primitive" and the "conceptual."[5] This division is not an arbitrary one, for it indicates the two realms on which Vergil has drawn for his symbolism.

To account for the meaning and the complexity of the Bough, neither the "primitive" nor the "philosophical" interpretation will suffice in itself. Indeed the significance of the Bough for the Book as a whole and the fascination it exercises lie precisely in its balancing of the two realms. In the Bough Vergil has created a symbol which conveys the complexities he wishes to present. In its origins as in its nature it questioningly spans opposites.

It is Vergil's manner, from the *Eclogues* on, to draw from many sources and to fuse them into a new unity wherein the boundaries between the individual elements blur and the elements themselves take on new meanings. Such is eminently the case with the Bough. Here, as throughout the *Aeneid*, synthesis and transformation are an essential part of Vergil's creation. In antiquity a competent judge maintained that Vergil simply invented the whole motif of the Bough: *Sed adsuevit poetico more aliqua fingere, ut de aureo ramo* ("But it is his manner to invent things in the manner of a poet, as in the case of the Golden Bough") says Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.19.2) quoting Cornutus. That Vergil "invented" the motif we may, since the researches of Frazer and Norden, confidently doubt. But that he reformed and reconceived its function *poetico more* is as certain as anything can be in poetry.

The union of folkloristic and philosophical elements in the Bough is only one manifestation of a larger duality in the Book. It parallels the counterpoise achieved between the mythological and philosophical views of the Underworld. Counterpoise, not contradiction, for, as Otis has convincingly demonstrated, the older view of the Book as failing to unite these two levels involves a misapprehension of Vergil's art and purpose.[6]

The meaning of the Bough, like that of any literary symbol, must first be grasped in its specific narrative context.

Servius' suggestive comments about Persephone and Nemi have obscured his modest-appearing statement about Misenus:

> Ramus enim necesse erat ut unius causa esset interitus,
> unde et statim mortem subiungit Miseni. . . .
>
> (For it was necessary that the Bough should be the cause of one death; and hence he adds at once the death of Misenus. . . .)

This connection of the Bough with Misenus is of the highest importance. There are two descriptions of the Bough. The first (136–48) is given by the Sibyl almost in the same breath as her allusion to Misenus' death (149–55); and the details of his death and burial follow immediately upon her words (156–82). The Bough is described the second time immediately after Aeneas' prayer:

> Si nunc se nobis ille aureus arbore ramus
> ostendat nemore in tanto! quando omnia vere
> heu nimium de te vates, Misene, locuta est (187–89).
>
> (If only that Golden Bough would reveal itself to us in such a grove! For the prophetess spoke everything truly, alas, too truly, about you, Misenus).

As he pronounces, groaning, the name of Misenus, there appear the twin doves which guide him to the Bough:

> Vix ea fatus erat geminae cum forte columbae
> ipsa sub ora viri caelo venere volantes,
> et viridi sedere solo (190–92).
>
> (Scarcely had he spoken this when perchance twin doves came flying from the sky before the very face of the hero and perched on the green earth).

After the second description of the Bough (204ff) and Aeneas' success in obtaining it (210–11), we hear again of Misenus and the burial:

> Nec minus interea Misenum in litore Teucri
> flebant et cineri ingrato suprema ferebant (212ff)
>
> (And meanwhile the Trojans were bewailing Misenus nothing less and performing the last rites for the ungrateful corpse).

This second description of the Bough (204ff) serves no function in the progression of the action. Indeed the whole Golden Bough episode is hardly necessary to advance the plot and in fact, as Büchner observed, effects only its retardation[7]—all the more

reason for seeking its significance in a symbolic rather than purely narrative function.

Puzzling above all are these repetitions of Misenus. Scholars have not only voiced their perturbations, but even carried them into action in attacks upon the text.[8] The problem, then, is, why *two* separate descriptions of the Bough and two accounts of Misenus' funeral, and why are the Bough and Misenus made to interlock in this complicated manner?

What Vergil attains through these repetitions is to frame the Golden Bough with the immediate fact of death. The first description of the Bough (136ff) is directly preceded by the Sibyl's words on the horror of death in general:

> . . . facilis descensus Averno:
> noctis atque dies patet atri ianua Ditis (126ff).
>
> (. . . The descent to Avernus is easy: night and day the gate of gloomy Dis lies open).

And when she has finished describing the character (136–44) and the laws (145–48) of the Bough, she announces at once that a corpse—so far unnamed—is awaiting attention (149–51); and she makes the care for the body an important prerequisite for the journey:

> sedibus hunc refer ante suis et conde sepulcro.
> duc nigras pecudes; ea primo piacula sunto.
> sic demum lucos Stygis et regna invia vivis
> aspicies. dixit, pressoque obmutuit ore (152–55).
>
> (Bring him first to his place and bury him in a grave. Bring black victims: let these be the first offerings of atonement. So at last you will behold the groves of the Styx and the realms that are pathless to the living. She spoke, and with tight-closed lips fell silent).

In a similar way Misenus' death frames the second description of the Bough in 204–11: Aeneas' lament for Misenus (188–89) comes just before, and the burial itself just after (212–235).

The pattern of circumstances surrounding the Bough, then, is as follows:

Sibyl's description of death and the Underworld (125–36)
The Golden Bough: first description (136–48)
Sibyl's allusion to Misenus' death (149–55)
Story of Misenus' death and preparation for burial (165–82)
Aeneas' prayer for the Bough (183–88)
Aeneas' lament for Misenus (188–89)
The doves; second description of the Bough; Aeneas obtains Bough (190–211)

Misenus' burial (212–35)
Aeneas' entrance to the Underworld (236ff).

The order of the narrative suggests that Misenus' life is in a sense the price of the Bough, as Palinurus' life in Book V is the price of Aeneas' arrival in Italy. Such was Servius' understanding of the passage, as his reference to Misenus, cited above, shows: "For it was necessary that the Bough should be the cause of one death. . . ."

Properly speaking, the Bough is not explicitly a "cause" of Misenus' death. He brings his end upon himself. But present here is the old motif of gaining access to the Underworld through association with a newly slain corpse. The motif is familiar from the Elpenor story of the *Odyssey* and from Aristophanes' *Frogs* (170ff). The elaborate burial ceremonies of Misenus may contain a trace of a still more primitive, and more sinister, idea, namely the necessity of a human sacrifice for the rites that precede the descent; and the ambiguity of Servius' matter-of-fact, *ut unius causa esset interitus*, may contain an allusion to such rites. Shortly before, the gods required a similar sacrifice that Aeneas should arrive at Avernus:

> tutus, quos optas, portus accedet Averni.
> unus erit tantum amissum quem gurgite quaeres;
> unum pro multis dabitur caput (5.813–15)
>
> (He will arrive in safety at the harbor of Avernus, as you hope. There he will be only one whom you will miss, lost in the flood; one life will be given for many),

says Neptune to Venus; and his rather strange use of the phrase *portus Averni* for Italy significantly links Palinurus and Misenus since Vergil elsewhere uses Avernus only of the entrance to the Underworld (e.g. 6.201, *inde ubi venere ad fauces grave olentis Averni*, "then when they came to the jaws of deadly-smelling Avernus. . . ."). Thus both Palinurus and Misenus are victims, one directly, the other indirectly, sacrified for the attainment of a goal; and Vergil's language and narrative faintly intimate that they are human sacrifices needed for the descent to Hades. They are sacrifices in a larger sense too; but Vergil's narrative suggestively juxtaposes a primitive type of sacrifice with sacrifice of a more complex order.

The Bough, then, to return to Misenus, makes its appearance in the context of death: first the general horror of death and Hades in the Sibyl's prefatory remarks (125–36) and then the actual, concrete experience of Misenus' death and the suffering it causes Aeneas (note the emphasis on Aeneas' grief in *heu nescis*, 150; *maesto defixus lumina vultu*, 156; *curis*, 159; *omnes . . . fremebant/ praecipue pius Aeneas*, 175–76; *heu nimium de te . . .*, 189, etc.).

Vergil doubtless intends a parallel between Aeneas and Odysseus, who experiences the fact of death close at hand in Elpenor, the first shade he meets in Hades before those whose deaths lie at greater remove. Thus the Sibyl's description of Misenus,

> praeterea iacet exanimum tibi corpus amici
> (heu nescis) totamque incestat funere classem,
> dum consulta petis nostroque in limine pendes (149–51)
>
> (Besides there lies the lifeless body of your friend—alas you know it not—and it pollutes the whole fleet with death while you are seeking advice and cling here at our gates),

recalls both Patroclus in *Iliad* XXII,

> Κεῖται πὰρ νήεσσι νέκυς ἄκλαυτος ἄθαπτος (22.386)
>
> (He lies by the ships a corpse, unwept, unburied),

and Elpenor in the *Odyssey*:

> πρώτη δὲ ψυχὴ Ἐλπήνορος ἦλθεν ἑταίρου·
> οὐ γάρ πω ἐτέθαπτο ὑπὸ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης·
> σῶμα γὰρ ἐν Κίρκης μεγάρῳ κατελείπομεν ἡμεῖς
> ἄκλαυτον καὶ ἄθαπτον, ἐπεὶ πόνος ἄλλος ἔπειγε (11.51–54)
>
> (And first came the ghost of his companion Elpenor, for he had not yet been buried beneath the wide-wayed earth; for we left his body in Circe's chamber, *unwept and unburied*, since other toil pressed us on).

And Vergil has forged an even stronger link between Elpenor and Misenus in having the Sibyl preface her description of the Bough and her allusion to Misenus with another reference to the *Odyssey*:

> Quod si tantus amor menti, si tanta cupido est
> bis Stygios innare lacus, bis nigra videre
> Tartara, et insano iuvet indulgere labori,
> accipe quae peragenda prius (133–36)
>
> (But if there is in your mind such love, if there is such desire to swim the Stygian lakes twice, twice to behold black Tartarus, and if your delight is in giving way to this mad task, learn what first must be performed).

The second line (134) is an unmistakable, if characteristically Vergilian, adaptation of *Odyssey* 12.21–22:

> σχέτλιοι, οἳ ζώοντες ὑπήλθετε δῶμ' Ἀΐδαο,
> δισθανέες, ὅτε τ' ἄλλοι ἅπαξ θνήσκουσ' ἄνθρωποι
>
> (Poor wretches who living have gone down into the House of Hades, twice-dying, when other men die once).

The Sibyl, as instructress of the route to Hades, has taken over Circe's task in the *Odyssey* (a substitution characteristic of the

differences between Aeneas' and Odysseus' journeys); but it is on his *return* from Hades that Circe addresses the above words to the hero whereas Vergil has made the motif of the "twice-dying" part of the instructions that *precede* Aeneas' descent. Vergil has also doubled Homer's Elpenor motif, placing one version before the descent in the death of Misenus and making the other part of the experience of Hades itself in the encounter with Palinurus (see below). He thus extends to the Homeric figure a symbolic generality and overlays Homeric factuality with the complexity of anxious anticipation.

Before we can go further with the relation between the Bough and Misenus, however, we must examine more fully the descriptions of the Bough itself. A preliminary qualification is necessary: the Bough has meant many things to many interpreters and may have meant many things to Vergil himself. Obviously to seek a single meaning for so profound and complex a symbol is to mistake the very character of a poetic symbol and to fail to appreciate the suggestive fusion of multiple meanings which is Vergil's great poetic gift. This warning does not imply, however, that one can propose any meaning for the Bough at will. Rather, there are several possible overlapping meanings, all belonging to the same general realm of ideas but shifting slightly in value and emphasis as the narrative progresses and interweaves more tightly the web of actions and images of which it is made. Such a symbol, like an artfully cut jewel, retains its uniqueness of identity, its icy sharpness of form, but still reveals different patterns and colors as it is held to different lights.

It will be helpful to have the two descriptions of the Bough, familiar as they are, before our eyes:

latet arbore opaca
aureus et foliis et lento vimine ramus,
Iunoni infernae dictus sacer; hunc tegit omnis
lucus et obscuris claudunt convallibus umbrae.
sed non ante datur telluris operta subire
auricomos quam qui decerpserit arbore fetus.
hoc sibi pulchra suum ferri Proserpina munus
instituit. primo avulso non deficit alter
aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo.
ergo alte vestiga oculis et rite repertum
carpe manu; namque ipse volens facilisque sequetur,
si te fata vocant; aliter non viribus ullis
vincere nec duro poteris convellere ferro. (136–48)

(There lies hidden on a dark tree a Bough in its foliage and bending shoot Golden, said to be sacred to Juno of the Lower World; this a grove entire conceals and shadows enclose it in dark valleys. But it is not granted to any one to descend to the covert places of the earth save to him who has first plucked the golden-haired growth from the tree. Beautiful Persephone commanded this to be brought to her as her due service. When the first (bough) is torn off, there fails not another of gold, and the branch blossoms with metal like to that before. Therefore seek it with your eyes aloft, and pluck it with your hand when it is duly found; for it will follow of itself, willingly and easily, if the fates call you; otherwise you will not be able to conquer it with any strength nor tear it away with hard iron).

'este duces, o, si qua via est, cursumque per auras
derigite in lucos ubi pinguem dives opacat
ramus humum. . . .'
inde ubi venere ad fauces grave olentis Averni,
tollunt se celeres liquidum per aëra lapsae
sedibus optatis gemina super arbore sidunt,
discolor unde auri per ramos aura refulsit.
quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum
fronde virere nova, quod non sua seminat arbos,
et croceo fetu teretis circumdare truncos,
talis erat species auri frondentis opaca
ilice, sic leni crepitabat brattea vento.
corripit Aeneas extemplo avidusque refringit
cunctantem, et vatis portat sub tecta Sibyllae (194–96, 201–11).

("May you be my guides if there is any path and direct your way through the air to the grove where the rich Bough darkens the bountiful earth. . . ." Then when the doves came to the jaws of deadly-smelling Avernus, they rise swiftly and slipping through the liquid air they perch on the wished-for place, high on a tree of twin nature [reading *gemina* with MP] from which the sheen [breath?] of gold, of flashing color, shines out. As mistletoe at the cold of the winter solstice is wont to grow green in the forests with new leafage —the mistletoe which is not seeded from its own tree—and surrounds the smooth trunk with its yellow growth: such was the dark appearance of the gold burgeoning into leaf on the dark oak, thus did the foil tinkle in the light breeze. At once Aeneas seizes it and greedily breaks it off, though it holds back, and bears it to the halls of the soothsaying Sibyl).

The words which introduce the Bough in both passages stress its paradoxical union of contradictions: dark, but golden (*arbore opaca/aureus*, 136–7), rich, but belonging to the earth (*pinguem dives opacat/ramus humum*, 195–96). The enjambment of 136–37, *opaca/aureus*, makes the fusion of opposites even more expressive. Similar is the hyperbaton of 141, *auricomos . . . fetus*, where the two opposing conditions confront one another at

opposite ends of the line. The ambiguity o fthe Bough's place in nature is made still more tight in the oxymoron, *frondescit virga metallo* ("the branch blossoms with metal," 144), echoed in the second passage, *talis erat species auri frondentis opaca ilice,* (208–9, "such was the appearance of the gold burgeoning into leaf on the dark oak"), where the effect is compounded by combining the metal-plant opposition (*auri frondentis*) with that of bright-dark (*auri-opaca*). To the visual contradictions of the Bough (cf. *species* in 208) are added the contradictions to the ear in the following line, . . . *ilice sic leni crepitabat brattea vento* (209). With the living ilex before one's eyes, one is again brought back, through one's ears, to the inorganic, metallic realm in the harsh tinkle, *crepitabat brattea*, of gold leaf in the wind.

Literally as well as metaphorically the Bough occupies a place between worlds—between the organic, living world of green plant and the inorganic, lifeless world of metal. Its substance is *auri frondentis*, gold instilled with life. Geographically it is placed between the realm of the dead and the upper world. It stands at the entrance to Lake Avernus (201), a place which negates the saving heavenly power, Venus and her doves, which brought Aeneas to it:

> quam super haud ullae poterant impune volantes
> tendere iter pennis: talis sese halitus atris
> faucibus effundens supera ad convexa ferebat (239–41)
>
> (Above which no birds winging their way in flight could hold their course in safety: such exhalations did it pour forth and bear upward from its dark jaws to the vaults of heaven).

Persephone, to whom the Bough is sacred, is here called "Juno of the Lower World": the Bough is *Iunoni infernae dictus sacer* (138). One can hardly explain so striking an expression merely as a periphrasis to avoid the repetition of *Proserpina* which is to come in line 142. Such a carefully chosen and "artificial" epithet has a special significance in this context. Here we have a suggestion not only of the opposition between Upper and Lower Worlds, but the intimation of another set of opposites: Venus and Juno. Juno was invoked in her infernal aspect by Dido, along with Hecate and the avenging Furies or Dirae (4.608ff. and cf. *Iovi Stygio*, 4.638[9]). Here in VI she points back to something of the passion-filled atmosphere and unreasoning violence of that earlier stage in Aeneas' journey. But throughout the *Aeneid* Juno, whether in her chthonic or Olympian aspect, appears as part of the world's sinister recalcitrance to order, as the essence of opposition and, in her perpetual *ira* and *dolor* (see 1.25ff), as the embodiment of the cruelty of life, the recrudescent hatred which dogs the journey and raises the pointed question of the beginning, doubtless blunted on

us by overfamiliarity: *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* ("Such ire in minds immortal?" 1.12).

It is to this dark, chthonic figure, then, that the Bough in part belongs. Yet Aeneas is led to it by Venus' doves, *maternas aves* (193), the gentle birds of the goddess of love and life, "gliding through the liquid air" (202; cf. 194). Hence life and death again meet in the Bough, and with it the twofold nature of the gods: hostile, destructive, irrationally angry in Juno; helpful, gentle, maternal in Venus. And behind the gods stands the riddle of the universe itself: on the one hand mysterious, inpenetrable, discordant; and on the other ordered, harmonious, governed by the fates which call the hero to the Bough (*si te fata vocant*, 147).

Yet even in its connections with the Lower World the Bough is not free from ambiguities, for though Persephone demands it as a gift, a superb supernatural passport, Vergil points out in the same line that the Underworld goddess is herself beautiful: *hoc sibi pulchra suum ferri Proserpina munus/instituit* ("Beautiful Persephone commanded this to be brought to her as her due service"). "*Pulchra* need be no more than an ornamental epithet," Conington remarks, "but its position seems to show that the beauty of the gift is considered to be approprite to the beauty of the goddess."[10] The Bough is indeed "beautiful," but its beauty is of the same mysterious, dangerous quality as that of the goddess to whom it must be presented; and, like her, drawing its violent possessor by its very beauty, it will be torn by force from its place in the Upper World and carried off to the shades below.

Even the gold of the Bough is essential to this ambiguity. Obviously beautiful (note the ornate *auricomos*, 141), this gold yet has something awesome and portentous in it: hence its strange, ghostly sheen, *discolor auri aura*, 204 (*aura* suggesting perhaps emptiness and unreality) and the thin, metallic sound of its unnatural foliage, *crepitabat brattea vento* (209). Gold and all, the Bough cannot be called "beautiful" in any simple or conventional sense. The feelings it excites belong rather to that realm which the Romans associate with the *prodigium* or the *sacrum*: awe, mystery, a mixture of wonder, reverence, and fear.

But this gold too has, appropriately, its own set of contradictory associations. As Norden showed,[11] gold is traditionally connected in antiquity with the dead and the Underworld powers, especially Demeter and Persephone. A striking passage in Artemidorus connects gold with death because it is pale in color, heavy, and cold ("Gold is pale and heavy and cold, and for this reason it is likened to death," Artemid. 1.77). On the other hand, gold is also associated with immortality, with the Olympian gods, and the rewards of heroes. Homer's gods have golden thrones, bridles, wings, etc. Aphrodite is "golden." Circe and Calypso have golden veils. Throughout Pindar gold is associated with achievement approach-

ing divine brilliance. In the myth of Heracles the golden apples of the Hesperidae are the hero's last task and confer on him admission to Lympus and immortal life.[12]

Something of this mystical quality of gold appears in a celebrated passage of Pindar's Second Olympian Ode: on the island of the blest where just men dwell after death

> there blaze blossoms of gold (ἄνθεμα χρυσοῦ), some on land from brilliant trees, others nourished by the water; and with necklaces of these they entwine their hands and (make) crowns in accord with the upright counsels of Rhadamanthys . . . (*Ol.* 2.68–75).

These "blossoms of gold" growing on "brilliant trees," occur, moreover, in a context of purification and reward after death probably influenced by Pythagorean ideas which also play a large part in Vergil's conception of the Underworld. It is unclear how concretely Pindar thinks of these "golden flowers," for he often uses ἄνθος or related words metaphorically. But regardless of his exact sense, his phraseology and the concreteness of his language—bright trees in the Underworld and a plant of gold, all in an opposite context for Vergil's theme—may have contributed more to the Golden Bough than most commentators seem to admit. Like the Bough, Pindar's "golden flowers" stand between life and death: shining in the Underworld, they are a sign of an eternal life, a life of bliss, for the pure of soul. Yet the differences are as significant as the similarities. Unlike Pindar's blessed souls, Aeneas has no abiding joy in the Bough. For him it is not the reward of an afterlife, but the token of a necessary passage and a symbol of the contradictions involved in his mission as a whole. It marks not attained success, but continued effort and transition. Hence Pindar's "flowers of gold" are surrounded by a blaze of light (φλέγει . . . ἀπ' ἀγλαῶν δενδρέων), while Virgil's more mysterious plant belongs half to darkness, its tree not "brilliant," but strangely dim (*arbore opaca,* 136).

The line which describes the brightness of the Bough's gold is one of the least translatable of the *Aeneid,* for in it meet all the mysterious paradoxes of the Bough:

> discolor unde auri per ramos aura refulsit (204)
>
> ("from which the sheen of gold, of clashing color shines out").

Aura, properly "breath," "air," "wind," belongs to the realm of heavenly phenomena in which one pole of the Bough's nature is rooted. It contrasts with the gold's provenience from the earth (see 195, *pinguem dives opacat humum*). (It is a commonplace of ancient thought to associate wealth and earth, gold and Underworld—cf. Pluto-Plutus; Dis-*dives* and cf. Horace, *Odes* II. 2. 2–4). *Discolor* is usually taken to mean "of contrasting color." Yet *dis* in compounds suggests hashness, discord, as in the pair *concors-discors* (note *concolor,* 8.82, of the white sow in a context which promises hope and harmony).[13] *Discolor* in a passage of Horace seems to suggest something of this harsher connotation:

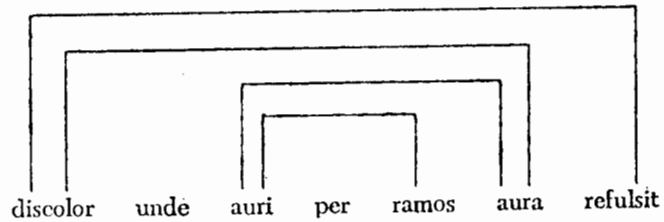
> Ut matrona meretrici dispar erit atque
> *discolor,* infido scurrae distabit amicus (*Epist.* 1.18.3–4)
>
> (Just as a matron will be unlike and of different color from a common prostitute, so a friend will be far from a faithless buffoon).

This suggestion is reinforced by Vergil's use of the related *decolor* in a passage also involving gold: Evander in VIII complains of the decline from the "golden age" of Saturn:

> sic placida populos in pace regebat,
> deterior donec paulatim ac decolor aetas
> et belli rabies et amor successit habendi (8.325–27)
>
> (Thus he ruled his people in gentle peace until little by little there came a worse and off-color age and the madness of war and love of gain).

And *amor habendi* recalls another unhappy meaning of gold in the poem, the *auri sacra fames* ("accursed hunger for gold," 3.57) of the "blind love for gold" (1.349) which leads men to violate human and natural laws. Thus, to return to *discolor,* Vergil's use of the word (itself uncommon in Latin) may suggest that the union of living branch and mysteriously precious gold is by no means harmonious. Life and death are not easily conjoined.

The line itself is so arranged as to make these contrasts as pointedly condensed as possible. The visual words, *discolor* and *refulsit,* stand at the two ends of the verse. The addition of the prefix *re-* further suggests the strange quality of this light: it is as if reflected "back" and hence unnatural in still another way. The word order stresses all the complexity of the relations:



The basic contrast of "gold" and "branches," *auri-ramos*, holds the center of the line, and around it the almost Gorgianic paradox (paronomasia) *auri . . . aura*. Through these collocations, *discolor . . . refulsit* and *auri . . . aura*, the unnatural encloses the natural object, just as the Bough lives on "a tree not its own" (206).

Thus the diction and composition of a single line reflect a host of conflicts and ambiguities: upper air and earth-delved gold, living and lifeless, brightness and strident disharmony of color. The line itself pushes language to its limits. Commentators have thrown up their hands in despair: "Aber aus griechischer oder lateinischer Poesie ist mir nichts genau Entsprechendes bekannt," said Norden frankly.[14] More sensitively Macrobius: *Quid est enim* aura auri *aut quemadmodum aura refulget? Sed tamen pulchre usurpavit* ("What then is *aura auri* or how can 'air,' 'breathe,' shine? But still Vergil has appropriated its beautifully," *Sat.* 6.6.8). The "beauty" which Macrobius has found here is like Persephone's above (142), for the Bough stands on the borders not only of life and death, but also of the beautiful and the terrible, the welcoming and the awesome. Hence we encounter almost in every line that describes it, in the adjectives and sounds which give it substance, the muted clash of opposites.

The association of the Bough with Persephone (142) is related to another level of its meaning, namely the fertility symbolism of the mistletoe (205ff). As Frazer and Norden demonstrated in broadly ramifying detail,[15] the mistletoe is itself an ancient symbol of the mysteries of life and death. In the northern myth of Balder, "the mistletoe was not merely the instrument of Balder's death, but . . . it contained his life."[16] Classical writers note that it grows and blooms without contact with the earth and apparently without seeds. Yet with this remarkable power of apparently self-generating life, it can destroy the tree it lives on. It flourishes in the very depths of winter, when all else is dead:

> quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum
> fronde virere nova, quod non sua seminat arbos (205–6)
>
> (As mistletoe at the cold of the winter solstice is wont to grow green with new leafage—the mistletoe which is not seeded from its own tree. . . .)

In its possession of life in the midst of death the mistletoe makes the Bough a fitting key for the living hero to possess in entering Hades. Vergil here draws upon the dimmer recesses of man's ritual and magical past.

Vergil's *brumali frigore* is, as Norden saw, specific and important for the meaning of the Bough. It places the Bough's new "life" against the year's death at the winter solstice (*bruma*), the point when the life energies of the cosmos are at their lowest ebb, the moment of death-like dormancy before life begins to flow back.[17]

If the gold suggests permanence outside the realm of organic nature, the mistletoe suggests permanence within nature. The one is the immortality of the gods, the other the inexhaustible vitality of the forests. And yet the mistletoe, like the Bough itself, does not belong unambiguously to the plant world: "Its position high upon the branch of a tree," Frazer explained, seemed "to protect it from the dangers to which plants and animals are subject on the surface of the ground."[18] The mistletoe too stands in a suspended position, enjoys the primitive magic of life's essence without contact with the earth, without the risks of generation (*quod non sua seminat arbos*, 206).

In weaving the complex symbolism of the Bough, Vergil has subtly fused the primarily Olympian immortality of gold, full of Homeric and Pindaric (though also Eleusinian and chthonic) associations, with the more primitive nature-magic of the mistletoe. The lines on the gold and the mistletoe respectively, both stressing the Bough as a symbol of life, echo one another:

> . . . . primo avulso non deficit alter
> aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo (143–44)
>
> (When the first is torn off, there fails not another of gold, and the branch blossoms with metal like to that before)
>
> quale solet silvis brumali frigore viscum
> fronde virere sua, quod non sua seminat arbos (205–6).

The connection is significant. At a distance the two passages blend together in the mind. This blending helps fuse the two sides of the Bough: the lifeless permanence of the inorganic and the continual renewal through death of organic life. The Bough has life without the harsh terminus of death (*primo avulso non deficit alter . . .*), and possesses the mysterious powers of death without loss of beauty (note the emphasis on the beauty of both the gold and the mistletoe in closely parallel expressions: *auricomos fetus* of the gold in 141 and *croceo fetu* of the mistletoe in 207). Ancient thought, with its close access to its more primitive background, often looked upon life and death not as absolute opposites but as conjoined aspects of a single immense reality. It is that reality, indivisible and paradoxical, which the Bough, in its largest terms, symbolizes.

Commentators have in general not done justice to this far-reaching complexity. Frazer illuminated an important area from which Vergil drew, but limited himself to what was behind the Bough rather than what Vergil has made of it. With his Darwinian passion for collecting and genealogizing and his rationalistic

bias, he tended toward an oversimplified, one-dimensional meaning. With Norden, indispensable though he is, the Bough fared little better; and Vergil's poetry sinks under the heavy weight of Quellenfragen and clausulae. More recent scholars too have tended to isolate only one of its meanings. Conway, for instance, connected it with "the strength of natural affection" since it is so closely linked with Aeneas' journey to Anchises and his burial of Misenus.[19]

Far superior—and perhaps the best literary interpretation of the Bough hitherto—is Brooks' essay. Brooks does justice to its complexities and ambiguities, yet he seems to suggest a perhaps premature resolution.

> If Aeneas' will is to become the exceptional reality, a sign of success is demanded. That sign is the golden bough; death-in-life. The magic is allopathic; the two strange unions complement each other and together complete an invulnerable circle which transcends nature.[20]

It is not, however that the Bough "transcends nature," but rather that it is, in a sense, nature itself: it focuses the ultimates fact of man's position between the cycles of organic life and the effort toward permanence, between the fragile green of new growth and the perdurable beauty of brilliant metal, between creatureliness and eternity. Hence it is not the "exceptional reality" only which the Bough embodies, but *the* reality of human life. Brooks comes closer to this view at a later point in his essay when he speaks of the Bough as "unnatural, embodying the contrasts of nature, rather than supernatural, transcending them."[21] But "unnatural" is a bit confusing here. To be sure the Bough is "unnatural" is so far as it does not belong to what is predictably and ordinarily encountered in the world. Yet it is precisely by being "outside" of nature that it reflects back a more intense image of what nature is. The Bough must lie *both* within and above the order of nature in order to contain symbolically the contradictions which nature presents to man and man to nature. The Bough images a reality of which nature is only one pole: on the one hand the inescapable laws of growth and death; on the other a glimpse into eternity and the ever renewed power of life. Both sides, as will appear, are essential to Aeneas' journey and to the tragic tone of the Book: the vivid reality of death, precursor of the far more terrible reality of Dante's *Inferno*, and transcendence through the creations of man's spirit and energy: filial love (to return to Conway) and history. The Bough is as "unnatural" as Aeneas' wish to see Anchises (*si tanta cupido*, 133). Love, spiritual renewal, the consciousness of history are not parts of "nature" in its usual sense.

Maud Bodkin has approached this view of the Bough in seeing it as symbolizing "the unity of all life and its power of self-renewal, through faith in which the poet traverses the depths and wins his way back to light."[22] But Miss Bodkin incurs the risk of distorting and limiting Vergil's symbol in giving it a primarily subjective meaning. This type of criticism too easily assumes that poetry is written about the "creative process," when in fact the poetry in question is not "about" poetry, but "about" life. Miss Bodkin thus would make Aeneas' descent a kind of allegory of the poet's soul and would see the Bough as "a natural symbol of that visionary power granted by heaven to those whose eyes 'piercing in the quest' are to explore the viewless places of the earth—the mysteries of death and life."[23] Though such an interpretation may have some validity, it truncates Vergil's intention and the outward-facing, active qualities of his heroic poem. The Bough is not only the token of the "visionary power" to explore life's mysteries: it is itself the mystery, the paradoxical reality of the world, of which the inner world, the imaginative, visionary world of which Miss Bodkin speaks, is only a part. Life and death are not intended by Vergil here solely figuratively or as metaphors for imaginative or spiritual processes; they are the basic terms of existence, the hard, exact measure of action and failure, love and loss.

Thus the Bough looks outward rather than inward—outward to encompass in a wide arc heaven and earth, permanence and process, divinity and mortality, the core and substance of life itself, and its tragedy. It is because the Bough does hold in itself these primal mysteries of life and death that it is not easily grasped, even by its chosen bearer. One is reminded of another Tree, the Fruit of which was not to be plucked. The order reflected by the Sibyl is more generous, at this point at least, than the narrative of *Genesis*. Yet, though she foretold that the Bough would "follow of its own will and with ease" (*ipse volens facilisque sequetur*, 146) if the fates call Aeneas, it holds back when he comes to pluck it, hesitates against the avidity of the hero:[24]

> corripit Aeneas extemplo avidusque refringit
> cunctantem (210–11)
>
> (At once Aeneas seizes it and greedily breaks it off, though it holds back)

In this moment of hesitation lie not only the complexity of the Bough itself, but also the ambiguity of the mortal hero's relation to it. For the Sibyl, a supernatural figure herself beyond the natural order, the Bough is a passive object; it will yield simply, "if the fates call." But when Aeneas comes to the actual experience of the Bough, its reluctance stands in disturbing contrast to the harsh eagerness of his grasp. All the words of line 210—*corripit, extemplo, avidus, refringit*—suggest sudden, violent action and peremptory force: they convey the urgency of life—life

with its time-limit—of which the Bough is free. The lines suggest then another complex level of contradiction in the Bough: passivity and activity. It is hardly, as Frazer regarded it, a simple "'open Sesame' in the hands of Aeneas to unlock the gates of death."[25] There is something in it which never fully surrenders. It presents to the living experiencer something unpredicted by the prophetess, perhaps unknown to her. Nor will the Bough remain with Aeneas beyond his penetration to the mid-point of Hades, the palace of Dis (cf. 628–37). He bears the Bough as long as he is experiencing the movement between life and death. When his journey has reached its goal (see 688, *vicit iter durum pietas*, "Your piety has conquered the hard road"), when he begins to pass out of the mysterious into history, when, after being more or less passively led, he is presented once more with the images of action and achievement, then he is no longer the possessor of the Bough.

II. The Golden Bough and Misenus

Having come so far in our examination of the Bough, we see why Aeneas must obtain it to enter the underworld. Like another magical tree, the Bough is a *σύμβολον τοῦ βίου καὶ τοῦ θανάτου*, an emblem of life and death.[26] It leads Aeneas to his new life as founder of Rome, to the life of the people who will follow after him, but brings him into confrontation also with the deaths that are the price of this foundation. As a symbol of rebirth,

> primo avulso non deficit alter
> aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo (143–44),

the Bough introduces and accompanies the journey in which life and death are so closely mingled. It images something of the nature of history itself: in its association with Misenus it foreshadows the deaths to come; yet as a symbol of rebirth it also marks these deaths as remnants of a past which must be met and overcome in order for the new hero and the new historical creation to be born.

It is precisely because the Bough stands so close to the springs of life and death, linking the human condition with what is both changeful and undying in the natural world, that it is made mysterious and difficult of access. In the circumstances surrounding it, Aeneas experiences the fullness of his mortal condition, a preparation, perhaps, for the symbolical enactment of his own death in his entrance into Hades (236ff). This preliminary experience of death comes, as noted earlier, first remotely and discursively in the Sibyl's description of Hades and second directly and immediately in Misenus. The adaptation of Circe's words from the *Odyssey* that were cited above, "Poor wretches who living have

gone down into the House of Hades, twice-dying, when other men die once," reinforces this sense of immediacy. Circe's words are neutral and lack descriptive detail. But the Sibyl conjures up the concrete reality of the experience: "twice to swim the Stygian lakes, twice to see black Tartarus" (134–35). She chooses verbs of action (*innare, videre*) which make the hero feel the cold Stygian waters (*innare*) and to sense the enclosing gloom of "black" Tartarus.[27] Circe addresses all of Odysseus' men together, whereas the Sibyl's admonition comes to Aeneas alone and in the singular (*accipe*, 136). He meets the grimness of death as the individual faces it, alone. Only later, after the interview, is there mention of *fidus Achates* (158–59), a shadowy companion at best.

Also unlike Odysseus, Aeneas undertakes the journey to Hades entirely of his own accord. In Odysseus' case, the journey is commanded arbitrarily as a necessary, but unexplained duty (*Od.* 10.490ff). Aeneas seeks the realms of death voluntarily, driven by love and longing. It is the very intensity of his involvement in mortality, the deeply human refusal to accept the disappearance of his father, the poignantly irrational desire (cf. *tantus amor menti, tanta cupido*, 133) to see again the beloved form (108), that gives his descent a directness of motivation and emotion lacking in the *Odyssey*.

The twofold character of the Bough, life and death, eternity and process, thus corresponds to the two sides of Aeneas' own ancestry. Aeneas first states his quest as a desire for his father, the mortal half of his parentage:

> ire ad conspectum cari genitoris et ora
> contingat (108–09)
>
> (May it happen to me to go to my dear father and [behold] his face.)

But it is his divine mother who leads him to the Bough and thus makes the descent possible (190ff, esp. 192, *maternas aves*). Indeed after his request, when the Sibyl addresses him in the speech that describes both the horrors of Hades and the wondrous Bough (125ff), she stresses his divided ancestry: she calls him, in the same breath, both the offspring of a god and the son of Anchises (*sate sanguine divum/Tros Anchisiade*, 125–26). The first part of her speech (125–32) continues this division and prepares for the Bough. Norden was too hasty in condemning the passage as "one of the weakest parts of the Book" and full of contraditions which even the assumption of future revision will not explain. The Sibyl speaks first of Hades, always lying grimly open (127). Then she turns to the few, beloved of Jupiter or distinguished for the virtue that "has carried them to the heavens" (*erexit ad aethera*, 130) who could succeed because divinely born (*dis geniti potuere*, 132; cf. *sate sanguine divum*, 125). And finally she

comes back to the grimness of death in the physical horror of Cocytus (131–32). This movement from death to divinity to death, then, is not contradictory,[28] but part of the large definition of the human condition contained in the Book.

There is, then, a deeper kinship between the Bough and Aeneas himself: both are involved in the order of nature, but in both there is something which transcends nature with the promise of immortality. These two elements pervade the book. They are present even in Misenus' death, involved though that is with the mortal part of Aeneas. Misenus is buried in lines 234–35 with the promise of an eternal name: Aeneas makes his grave

> monte sub aërio, qui nunc Misenus ab illo
> dicitur, aeternumque tenet per saecula nomen
>
> (. . . beneath a lofty mountain which is now called "Misenus" after him, and holds its name eternal through the centuries);

and in the next two lines he moves himself into the shadowy realm of the dead:

> His actis propere exsequitur praecepta Sibyllae.
> spelunca alta fuit vastoque immanis hiatu . . . (236–37)
>
> (Having accomplished these duties he hastens to carry out the instructions of the Sibyl. There was a cave, deep and huge in its vast opening. . . .)

Aeneas' symbolical death in his entrance to Hades contrasts with the real death of Misenus; and correspondingly Aeneas transcends mortality in his very lineage, while for ordinary mortals like Misenus it is history which promises a transcendence of death.

In leading into the Underworld journey, the Bough serves, of course, a literal as well as a metaphorical transitional function: it not only juxtaposes mortality and eternity, but also marks the transition "from our world to the world of myth." Yet it keeps this world of myth in touch with the realities—indeed, the ultimate realities—of human life. The nature of these realities and the possibilities for escaping them are presented in Misenus.

The juxtaposition of Misenus and the Bough underlines the tragic inflexibility of these realities. The Bough stands beyond the suffering to which mortals are subject. Hence its remote, awesome beauty, described by the equally remote Sibyl in 136–44, contrasts sharply with the sadness of Aeneas as he walks back to the fleet:

> Aeneas maesto defixus lumina vultu
> ingreditur linquens antrum (156–57)
>
> (Aeneas with downcast eyes and sad countenance leaves the cave and goes on.)

His suffering is fundamentally different from what the Bough can suffer:

> primo avulso non deficit alter
> aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo (143–44)
>
> (When the first is torn away another does not fail, also of gold, and the branch blooms in leaf with metal like to that before.)

His loss, unlike the Bough's, is not made good by the cycle of recurrence. There is no replacement that is "like" (*similis*, 143) the original. Aeneas can bury Misenus, to be sure, but he is not consoled, any more than he is for the other losses to come. The "eternal name" of Misenus in 234–35 is not described as a consolation; it is given in an impersonal and matter-of-fact way, as a bit of aetiological lore, quite in keeping, as Norden pointed out, with Vergil's epic traditions: "The modern reader feels this observation, standing as it does outside of the narrative, as a disturbance of the illusion, whereas the ancient reader was accustomed to such an effect through the conventional style of aetiological poetry."[29] Indeed, Misenus' "eternal name" only stresses the difference between the kind of eternity the Bough enjoys—the infinite similitudes of nature—and the eternity obtainable to men. The uniqueness of the individual is intensified by the very fact that he is commemorated by giving his name to an equally unique place. Human history takes the form of a line connected by unique points. The life of nature, as symbolized in the Bough, is a circle of identical recurrences, each replacing the other in an unnoticed and unwept succession.[30]

Misenus is given an "eternal name." But the *nomen*, though eternal, is not life; mere words do not flourish in sun and air. What stronger measure of the difference than the contrast between *non deficit alter/aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo* and *qui nunc Misenus ab illo/dicitur aeternumque tenet per saecula nomen* (235)? The first sentence is simple and full of concrete, vivid words; the second is heavy and formal, with a note perhaps of discouragement, hesitation in the stress on *dicitur* just before the *aeternum*. Despite (and perhaps *because of*) its grandiosity, the latter line has a touch of the tomb, a suggestion of the pallid chill of the monument, of the carved marble and the "official" hero. Commemorations are glorious, but empty of life, and history can only commemorate. That is its tragedy as measured against the life of the Bough.

Aeternus, as will appear more fully later, is an important word in Book VI. It reflects the poem's frame of reference for the tragedy of the human condition, namely time and history.

Here lies one of the fundamental differences between Vergilian and Homeric epic. In Homer, the emphasis falls on what may be

called the "personal" aspect of tragedy, the individual's desire for god-like power and his painful acceptance of mortal limitation. Vergil, in accordance with the subject of his epic, *genus unde Latinum/Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae* ("the origins of the Latin race and the Alban fathers and the walls of lofty Rome," 1.5–6), sees the theme of human limitation from the point of view of history: the death of the individual balanced by the eternity of the name—the *aeternum nomen*—in the annals of a people.

It is through the interplay between the Bough and Misenus that the mythical and the historical meet. Here Vergil encounters Homer on his own ground, as it were, and carries him into a very different setting. In Misenus he connects the Homeric "personal" aspiration for divinity with the theme of his own historical epic.

Misenus' death belongs to the realm of pure myth, and Vergil stresses this by artfully apologizing for its dubious credibility (*si credere dignum est*, 173). Misenus dies precisely because he challenges the gods, that is, defies the limits of mortality:

> sed tum, forte cava dum personat aequora concha,
> demens, et cantu vocat in certamina divos,
> aemulus exceptum Triton, si credere dignum est,
> inter saxa virum spumosa immerserat unda (171–74)
>
> (But then, while perchance he sounds his hollow shell over the sea, gone mad, and with his call challenges the gods to contests, jealous Triton, if the tale deserves belief, caught the hero amidst the rocks and drowned him in the foamy sea.)

Despite the criticism implied in *demens* (which, however, may imply pity as well), he is deeply mourned by all:

> ergo omnes magno circum clamore fremebant,
> praecipue pius Aeneas (175–76)
>
> (Therefore every one all about was groaning with great cries, especially dutiful Aeneas.)

His death stands in sharp contrast with Aeneas' success, and the contrast reveals the darker side of success and the absoluteness of those limits which the *aeternum nomen*, the reward of man in history, cannot fully transcend.

The elaborateness of his burial deepens this contrast, for it is full of strong, intentional Homeric reminiscences, especially of *Iliad* 23 and, less strikingly, of the end of *Iliad* 24. Thus the grand, heroic deaths of a Patroclus or an Hector are juxtaposed with the obscure end of Misenus.[31]

With this contrast another, closely related, is framed by Misenus' burial, namely a dramatic confrontation of past and

future. As the Bough, with its strong connections with the fates (*si te fata vocant*, 147), stands at the gateway to the future, Misenus' death, with its echoes of Homeric burials, closes off the past. It marks the passing of the Iliadic world to which Misenus, companion of Hector, belongs:

> Hectoris hic magni fuerat comes, Hectora circum
> et lituo pugnas insignis obibat et hasta
> postquam illum vita victor spoliabit Achilles,
> Dardanio Aeneae sese fortissimus heros
> addiderat socium, non inferiora secutus (166–70)
>
> (He had been the companion of great Hector, with Hector he would confront battles, glorious with trumpet and spear. After victorious Achilles deprived Hector of life, he, bravest of heroes, joined himself to Dardanian Aeneas as companion, following a side not weaker than before.)

Like Hector in Book II (270ff) Misenus is associated with the doomed past—"the curse of the dead city," in Brooks' phrase[32]—from which Aeneas must be free. Hence the special relevance here of the defeat of Hector (*postquam illum vita victor spoliabit Achilles*, 168): Misenus is the companion of a *vanquished* hero. He is that part of the past that is the dross of failure of which Aeneas, on the brink of his future destiny, is to be purged. Thus he anticipates the coming encounters with Trojan past, especially Palinurus and Deiphobus.

The burial of Misenus is further related to the movement away from the past through a subtle, but important echo of the destruction of Troy itself. At a crucial point in Book II Venus, by revealing to Aeneas the fearful sight of the gods at work uprooting Troy (2.604–23), turns her son from his reckless devotion to the flaming ruins to thoughts of life and the future. Immediately after, falling Troy is compared, in Homeric terms, to an ash-tree cut down on the mountains:

> Tum vero omne mihi visum considere in ignis
> Ilium et ex imo verti Neptunia Troia;
> ac veluti summis antiquam in montibus ornum
> cum ferro accisam crebrisque bipennibus instant
> eruere agricolae certatim. . . . (2.624–28)
>
> (Then in truth all Ilium seemed to me to lie in flames and Troy, founded by Neptune, to be overturned from its foundations; and just as when farmers press on in rivalry to throw down an ancient ash on the height of a mountain, cut at with iron and frequent blows of the axe. . . .)

In Misenus' burial the terms of the comparison become reality, and the loss of one man reflects symbolically the loss of a whole civilization:

> . . . aramque sepulcro
> congerere arboribus caeloque educere certant.
> itur in antiquam silvam, stabula alta ferarum,
> procumbunt piceae, sonat icta securibus ilex
> fraxineaeque trabes cuneis et fissile robur
> scinditur, advolvunt ingentis montibus ornos (6.177–82)

> (. . . They strive to heap up with trees an altar for the burial and raise it to the heavens. They go to an ancient forest, the lofty dwelling places of wild beasts; pitch-pines fall before them and the oak, struck by axes, resounds, and beams of ash and strong oak are split by wedges, and they roll huge ash-trees down the mountains.)

In both passages Vergil has carefully chosen his Homeric material to present a situation of destruction. The description of Misenus' burial draws heavily on the end of the *Iliad*, the burials of Patroclus and Hector (*Il.* 23.114ff and 24.782ff), contexts themselves suggestive of Troy's fall. In lines 166–170, furthermore, we were explicitly told that Misenus had been the companion of the warrior who embodied Troy's heroic resistance, Hector. This mention of Hector here in VI is another link between Misenus and Book II (note that Aeneas does not meet Hector in VI as he did in the dream of II: the burial of his companion, Misenus, is enough). The pyre of Misenus, then, with its references both to Book II and to the burials at the end of the *Iliad*, evokes again the violent death of the city of Troy. In Misenus, however, the past demands burial in order to give birth to the future. His burial, according to the Sibyl (152ff), is the chief obstacle to Aeneas' descent through death to life. Hence the purely destructive associations of the ash-trees of II is qualified here by the proximity of the tree that bears in its magical Bough both death and life. In Misenus, as in the Golden Bough—and indeed in the *Aeneid* as a whole—destruction stands hesitantly at the verge of creation.

Misenus, challenging the gods, dies as a Homeric hero and is buried as one. Yet Vergil uses him also for contrast with Homeric heroism. In him, as in Hector before him and Deiphobus after, Homeric heroism is checked and qualified. His struggle is no brilliant Homeric encounter: it takes place in isolation and in silence, unwitnessed and barely credible (*si credere dignum est*). There is a certain irony—and not an entirely uncompassionate irony—in the way in which death comes to this representative of Iliadic warfare, "glorious with the trumpet and the spear" (167). He meets his end not on the field of battle with the peers of both sides looking on, but in the silent mystery of the sea and its gods (*inter saxa virum spumosa immerserat unda*, 174), an unheroic and inglorious death by drowning.

These inner contrasts contained in the manner of his death and in his burial thus point to the common fate of mortality rather than the supra-human energies of the Iliadic heroes. Indeed if Misenus' final deed is meant to recall Achilles' combat with the Scamander in *Iliad* 21, the contrast is enormous. But here Vergil's historical orientation makes a significant difference. While the Homeric heroes leave no tangible memorial, not even the sea-wall of the Achaeans (*Iliad* 12.17ff), Misenus lives on through his participation in Aeneas' voyage. Maddened by the heroic ambitions of his past, he seeks to return to the Iliadic world that Aeneas has abandoned. Yet having accompanied Aeneas so far, he emerges into the light of history. He will survive not in heroic song, like Achilles' κλέα ἀνδρῶν, but in the geographical realities of the future Roman state.

Thus while the *aeternum nomen* provides a positive counterbalance to the Homeric atmosphere of waste and loss evoked in the pyre-scene (212ff), Misenus remains a tragic, if somewhat elusive, figure. Perhaps his vagueness and his bare emergence from the realm of myth are intended to help reinforce the mysterious atmosphere surrounding the Bough.

There is one final detail of his burial which resumes and clarifies his connection with the Bough. As one of the last acts of his funeral Aeneas sprinkles his companion with "a branch of fruitful olive" (*spargens rore levi et ramo felicis olivae*, 230). The living olive, the tree associated, from the *Odyssey* on, with life and nurture, contrasts with the *aureus ramus* and fixes Misenus' place in the organic cycle of nature. If the grasping of the Bough, with its metallic, barren foliage, symbolizes the possibility of transcending the boundaries of life and death, the olive branch underlines the full involvement in the limitations of mortality. Vergil has sensitively and characteristically emphasized this point in his choice of adjective, *felix*. *Felix* means "fertile" or "fruitful," and hence suggests the realm of organic life. But it also means "happy," and its opposite, *infelix*, one of the most heavily charged words of the poem, is consistently an epithet of tragic suffering. It is, for example, used of Priam (3.50), of Dido throughout IV and here in VI (*infelix Dido* are, in fact, Aeneas' first words to her, 6.456), and of the elder Brutus at the end of the Book (6.822). To Aeneas, then, is given the Golden Bough and a supernatural destiny; to Misenus, the "fruitful olive branch" that seals his participation in the natural processes of growth and death, however heroic his aspirations.

To conclude, the interweaving of Misenus and the Golden Bough is hardly fortuitous. Rather, it is expressive of the pervasive tragic sense underlying the *Aeneid*: a sense of the futility of the quest for immortality and of the absolute, inconsolable nature of the loss of individual life. But this interweaving also sets the individual loss into the context of the larger forces that govern history

and transcend the individual life. In suggesting these themes, Misenus is important for the rest of the book: he casts light retrospectively on Daedalus and prepares for the tragic figures to come: Palinurus, Marcellus, Caieta in VII. Behind all these figures echoes the promise of the *aeternum per saecula nomen*, partly in triumph and partly in sadness and solace.

III. Daedalus and Palinurus

Book VI begins with a reevocation of suffering, sorrow, effort. Aeneas' tears for Palinurus—*sic fatur lacrimans*—open the book, and grimness and foreboding mark the first announcement of Aeneas' purpose:

> . . . horrendaeque procul secreta Sibyllae,
> atrum immane, petit . . . (10–11)
>
> (He seeks the hidden dwelling of the terrible Sibyl far off, a huge cavern.)

This approach to the prophetess' mysterious cavern anticipates the actual entrance to Hades itself:

> spelunca alta fuit vastoque immanis hiatu (237)
>
> (There was a deep cavern, huge with its vast opening.)

As lines 10–11 point ahead to the effort to come, the lines immediately preceding the introduction of the Sibyl recall Book I, the beginnings of the tale of the difficult quest:

> iuvenum manus emicat ardens
> litus in Hesperium: quaerit pars semina flammae
> abstrusa in venis silicis, pars densa ferarum
> tecta rapit silvas inventaque flumina monstrat (5–9)
>
> (A band of young men rushes forth on to the Hesperian shore glowing with zeal; some seek the seeds of fire hidden away in the veins of flint; others rush through the woods, thick hiding places of wild beasts, and show the streams they've found.)

Compare Book I:

> Ac primum silici scintillam excudit Achates
> suscepitque ignem foliis atque arida circum
> nutrimenta dedit rapuitque in fomite flammam (1.174–76)
>
> (Then Achates first struck a spark from the flint and caught the fire in leaves and spread about dry kindling to nourish it and brought forth the flame among the tinder.)

In this next-to-last landing, as in that first in Libya, the basic act of establishing civilization closes one phase of wandering and introduces a purposeful effort toward a more definite goal. Through the reference back to I, beginning and end, past and future, focus on the descent to the realm of death.

Vergil does not, however, proceed with the Sibyl immediately. Aeneas' encounter with her begins, rather abruptly, with Daedalus, carver of the doors of the temple she keeps:

> iam subeunt Triviae lucos atque aurea tecta.
> Daedalus, ut fama est, fugiens Minoia regna . . . (13–14)
>
> (Now they approach the groves of Diana and the golden roof. Daedalus, as the story goes, fleeing the realms of Minos. . . .)

The conspicuous presence of Daedalus at such length here (lines 14–33) has often puzzled interpreters.[33] But, as will appear, he serves an important function: he foreshadows the sufferings of the individual in the *mythical*, not the historical world, sufferings which lead to no lasting fruition in history, hence no transcendence of death. Like the Sibyl, the Golden Bough, and Misenus, he belongs to the "mythical" side of the Book. His presence at this early point initiates the Book's fine balance between myth and historical reality.

As the exile seeking his true home, Daedalus is obviously related to Aeneas. Like Aeneas, he is a mature man at the height of his powers, a wanderer, alone save for his grown son. Like the Trojan, he is a creator leaving a blighted land for a new start. His search for home, however, concerns only himself and his son, whereas Aeneas seeks a home for a whole people. Since Daedalus' sufferings pertain only to the area of personal relations, it is fitting that his carvings point back to Aeneas' affair with Dido, the example *par excellence* of the entanglement of personal emotions with the larger, supra-personal mission. Both at the beginning of the Dido episode (1.446ff) and here in VI Aeneas stops to read significant carvings on the doors of a temple. There the scenes of the Trojan war adorning the temple of his enemy Juno summed up and sealed the immediate past. Here in VI the carved scenes also reflect Aeneas' recent past—"not his heroic, but his erotic past."[34] Daedalus' subjects are crime, guilt, and especially polluted and unhappy love: *crudelis amor* (24), *Veneris monimenta nefandae* (26). The unhappy love of a great queen, Pasiphae, (*magnum reginae . . . amorem*, 28) recalls that closer experience of the doomed love of a nobler queen, Dido; and Daedalus' pity for the love-sick Pasiphae (*magnum reginae . . . miseratus amorem*, "pitying the great love of the queen," 6.28) is perhaps echoed in Aeneas' meeting with Dido later in the book: *prosequitur lacrimis longe et miseratur euntem* ("He follows her a

long way with tears and pities her as she goes," 6.476). The carvings, executed by a fugitive from a world of corruption and cruelty—*fugiens Minoia regna*, 14—signify for Aeneas escape from a past full of suffering and guilt. It is important that this theme of flight should open the book which definitively shifts the fulcrum from Aeneas' past to his future and Rome's.

Yet here appears the major difference between Daedalus and Aeneas: Aeneas *does* leave the past behind. His is a glorious future. Daedalus has no future, only a past, the past commemorated on the golden doors. His line will not survive him. Thus the presence of Daedalus here, like that of Misenus later, enlarges the future triumph of Aeneas with the humane awareness of those who are left behind on the way, whose only monument is the tale of their suffering.

But the story of Daedalus, again like that of Misenus, offers a means of transcending suffering. As Misenus' death is compensated for by the *aeternum nomen* of the cape named after him, Daedalus seeks a lasting solace in the image of Icarus which he tries to carve:

> tu quoque magnam
> partem opere in tanto, sineret dolor, Icare haberes.
> bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
> bis patriae cecidere manus (30–33)
>
> (You too, O Icarus, would have a large part in so great a work did grief permit. Twice had he tried to fashion your misfortunes in gold; twice did the paternal hands fail.)

At the point in the poem, then, where Aeneas' blighted past begins to turn to success, Daedalus images the totality of failure. As the artist who symbolizes man's attempt to transcend death in "monuments of unageing intellect," he also fails. His hands fall before the work, and what he leaves behind are monuments of guilt, cruelty, passion: *Veneris monimenta nefandae* (26). His work as an artist survives him, to be sure, but he cannot make a work of what is dearest to him as a man. Through Daedalus Vergil juxtaposes art with history as modes of escaping death's nullification of the individual life. But in him too he presents the tragedy of art, with all its magic unable to restore the life that has been lost, unable even to commemorate its deepest grief. In this failure of Daedalus, this futility of the artist to convey what is closest to him, there is perhaps an intimation of the final gesture of Vergil himself, wishing on his deathbed to negate his own artistic creation.

Like Aeneas, Daedalus partakes of the full ambiguity of the human position, stands between the antitheses symbolized by the Golden Bough. As artist, he can create works which hold the attention of an eager, active hero generations later (*quin protinus omnia/perlegerent oculis, ni iam praemissus Achates/adforet*. . . .: "Indeed they would have perused everything with their eyes if Achates, sent on ahead, did not arrive, and with him the priestess of Phoebus and Diana Trivia," 33–35). But as an individual Daedalus is still subject to the losses which his art cannot mitigate. It is interesting, in this connection, that the doors and carvings of Daedalus, the gateway to the new world Aeneas is now entering, are of gold (*aurea tecta*, 13; *in auro*, 32). These golden doors contrast with Juno's bronze doors which Aeneas encountered in Carthage (1.448–9). The difference may not be without significance when one thinks of the familiar contrast between gold and bronze in the Hesiodic Ages (see *Works and Days*, 109ff, 143ff).[35] Bronze, then, at Aeneas' bare emergence from the heroic world of war and battles; gold opening on to the revelation of Aeneas' future and suggesting a mysteriousness and a remoteness, though also a brilliance, to be developed further in the Golden Bough.

Indirectly, then, the tragedy of Daedalus too is illumined by the Bough, but through him Vergil indicates that the transcending of the mortal condition is not given in individual terms. It is given to Aeneas only in terms of his line and history, and even here he endures suffering analogous to Daedalus' (note the parallel of 32–33 with 700ff).

Palinurus Palinurus is obviously closely related to Misenus, so closely related that the two can be considered as "doublets." Both meet a mysterious death—death from the sea—at the hands of gods; and for both death comes as a result of a defiance (different in the two cases) of a god. In both cases Aeneas is requested to give burial, and for both the "eternal name" of a place in the new homeland commemorates their suffering:

> . . . aeternumque tenet per saecula nomen: "(Misenus) keeps an eternal name throughout the centuries," 235
>
> aeternumque locus Palinuri nomen habebit: "The place will have the eternal name of Palinurus," 381

Hence both episodes, through the idea of the *aeternum nomen*, enact the tension between transience and eternity that focuses on the Golden Bough; and both deaths correspondingly contrast with the "rebirth" of Aeneas achieved in the Book. As literary survivals of a primitive notion of sacrifice (see above), they are surrogate victims for the hero's successful descent and return, the deaths demanded for the renewal of life.

Palinurus is the first shade addressed by Aeneas in the Underworld. This fact is significant and a bit surprising. Surprising because Aeneas encounters his past in reverse order; hence, on the analogy of the Elpenor episode in the *Odyssey*, Misenus, whose death Aeneas has most recently experienced, should be the first to

meet him in Hades. But Vergil has skillfully replaced Misenus by his "doublet," Palinurus, and has carefully manipulated the Odyssean material to effect this change smoothly. Misenus has already been buried—indeed, elaborately buried. Hence his soul has already crossed the Styx. Palinurus, unburied and outside the river, will, according to the geography of the Underworld, meet Aeneas first.

But this modification of the Odyssean *katabasis* is more than a concession to Underworld topography. Had Vergil wished to follow his Homeric model more closely, he might, for instance, have presented Misenus as just arrived and waiting to be ferried over with the many souls described in 305ff or in 411. Vergil's replacement of Misenus by Palinurus effects a closer fusion of the two figures: the one is interchanged with the other. It also marks a symbolical progression in Aeneas' descent into his past. This progression has three levels.

First, the movement from Misenus to Palinurus deepens the intensity of suffering. Misenus' death is the less tragic: he merely suffers the consequences of his "madness" in challenging the gods. He remains a shadowy figure, and Aeneas meets his death at a distance, as it were, a distance increased by the established rituals of burial. Palinurus, on the other hand, is a more concrete and "real" personage. What is more important, he is an innocent man destroyed by the malevolence of the gods according to Book V (835ff and note *insonti*, "innocent," 841) or by an unhappy (and unexplained) accident according to his own words in VI (384ff). In both versions he dies heroically performing his duty. Whereas Aeneas never confronts the actual circumstances of Misenus' death—and these are left veiled in myth anyway (171–74)—the encounter with Palinurus brings him face to face with the vivid horror of his companion's miserable end, related in the first person by the victim himself (349–62):

> paulatim adnabam terrae; iam tuta tenebam,
> ni gens crudelis madida cum veste gravatum
> prensantemque uncis manibus capita aspera montis
> ferro invasisset praedamque ignara putasset (358–61)
>
> (Little by little I swam close to the land; and now I had safety in my grasp if, weighted down as I was by my wet clothing and grasping at the hard spur of the mountain with clawing hands, a cruel people had not attacked me with the sword and in their stupidity thought me [a source of] booty.)

The heroism of Palinurus, the nobility of his courage and endurance as presented both in V (see 843–53) and here (especially 351–54: even in death he thinks of his duty), are intended to contrast harshly and pathetically with the meanness of his death.

They contrast also with the irresponsible, Achillean rashness of Misenus.

This contrast points to the second element in the progression. Aeneas not only comes closer to the intense tragedy of death, but moves from the realm of myth to the realities of chance suffering and wasteful, undeserved death. Misenus' death, as noted before, still clings to the shadow of myth, and Vergil himself casts a self-conscious glance at its imaginary quality (*si credere dignum est*, 173). In the case of Palinurus, the circumstances are literally credible, even though vague.

Palinurus' narrative, furthermore, contrasting as it does with the tale of his death in V, contributes strongly to this shift from myth to credible reality. In Book V(838ff) the god Sleep tries by deception to lull Palinurus to rest, fails, employs the magic of his wand with its "Stygian force" (*vi Stygia*, 855), and hurls him, rudder and all, into the sea. Commentators have often been disturbed by the contradiction with the version given in Book VI.[36] But there is no contradiction. The narrative in V does not say that Palinurus died by drowning; he is, as we see him last, full of life "calling often to his companions, but in vain" (860). The apparent discrepancy is only a difference in the point of view and in the mode of narration. In V the story is told in the third person by the omniscient narrator with the full panoply of epic conventions. In VI the victim tells the tale as he experienced it. Like any victim of a sudden catastrophe, he does not know exactly what happened. Indeed, his vagueness about the "great force" that tore off the rudder (6.349) is only a subtle reflection of the skill with which Vergil has kept apart and yet reconciled the divine and human levels. His *multa vi* (6.349) is the human victim's version of the god's *vi Stygia* (5.855). Note too the correspondence of details like *clavumque adfixus et* haerens/*nusquam amittebat* . . . ("Fastened to the rudder and *clinging* to it he never let it go . . ." 5.852–53) and *cui datus* haerebam *custos cursusque regebam praecipitans* [cf. *praecipitem* 5.680] *traxi mecum* ("Given to the rudder as its guardian I *clung* to it and directed our course, and in falling headlong I drew it along with me," 6.350–51). Hence when Palinurus deliberately denies that a supernatural agency was involved in his death (*nec me deus aequore mersit*, "nor did a god drown me," 6.348), he reinforces this movement away from the mythical into the humanly comprehensible. As a mere mortal he could not, of course, have known that Phorbas in 5.842 was Somnus in disguise, nor is there anything in his narrative in VI to indicate that the truth was ever revealed to him. In fact his ignorance makes him an even more pathetic victim of the gods than Misenus who calls them out face to face in the challenge. These elements—the contrast with the heroic mood of Misenus' death, the "realism" of Palinurus' own narrative, the striking

divergence from the divine machinery of V—all combine to set the Palinurus episode in a less lofty, if more poignant key.

This difference in the moods of the two deaths, the pathetic and the heroic, takes us to the third term in the symbolical progression from Misenus to Palinurus. This is connected with the two aspects of Aeneas' past, indeed the two basic elements in the tradition behind the whole *Aeneid*: *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the heroic warrior and the determined quester for home and city. Misenus belongs to Aeneas' heroic past, to the Iliadic world and to Hector who died in its defence. Palinurus belongs to Aeneas' wanderings, to the long search for the elusive new land, *semper cedentia retro* (3.496). Thus it is fitting that Misenus' death should occur early in the Book. The Trojan world becomes remote and irrecoverable as soon as Aeneas grasps the Bough. Even those representatives of Troy whom he will meet in Hades urge him on to the future, like Deiphobus: *i decus, i, nostrum; melioribus utere fatis* ("Go on, onward, our glory; enjoy better fates than ours," 546). Palinurus himself entreats Aeneas "by the hopes of rising Iulus" (*per spes surgentis Iuli*, 364). Palinurus thus not only belongs to a later portion of Aeneas' past, but is also intimately bound up with the years of effort to reach the land of the future. As the first of the figures encountered in Hades, he points toward this Italic future for which he steered so faithfully; and this very future, as imaged in Anchises' discourse, is, after all, the goal of the descent.

Aeneas, however, is not yet aware that this is the goal. His original aim was only to see again his dear parent: "One thing only I beg . . . : may it be granted to me to go and behold my dear father and (see) his face" (106ff). But through Palinurus something more is given: the hero's initial purpose begins to be bent toward its final, but unrealized goal, for in Palinurus is renewed the spirit of the years of wandering, of the firmly and courageously maintained quest. It is in this spirit that Palinurus died, this spirit which he embodied to the last:

> For the rudder was torn away by a great force; but I, appointed its guardian, clung to it and directed our course, and in falling headlong drew it after me. By the harsh seas I swear that I had no fear for myself, but only feared that your ship, deprived of its rudder, its pilot dashed away, might fail before the great waves that were rising (349–54).

And in the encounter with Palinurus the spirit of the years of wandering is also laid to rest: the pilot is not needed when the port has been reached.[37] After Palinurus Aeneas can begin to work through the other figures of his past until he stands again before the father who made him, purged him for the future.

Misenus and Palinurus are thus complementary aspects of Aeneas' past. Yet both hold up failure to Aeneas' success. If

Misenus presents the threat of exceeding human limitation, of failure through adhering to the heroic megalomania of the Bronze-Age, Iliadic hero, then Palinurus exemplifies the equal possibility of failure even though the Iliadic world is abandoned, even though the quest for a promised land is accepted. Palinurus enacts what Aeneas' voyage might have been. He does indeed reach Italy, but it is an Italy he never sets foot upon: *iam tuta tenebam /ni gens crudelis . . .* (357ff). Unlike Aeneas, he never gets clear of the sea. Hence the Italy he knows is only a vision, as dreamy and elusive for him now as the Phaeacians' land of the *Odyssey*:

> vix lumine quarto
> prospexi Italiam summa sublimis ab unda (356–57)
>
> (On the fourth day I scarcely discerned Italy as I rose on the top crest of a wave.)

His words are a significant imitation of Odysseus' approach to Scheria, *Od.* 5.392–3.

The echo of the *Odyssey*, however, is painfully ironic, for Palinurus is an Odysseus who will never emerge safely from the sea. The lines also recall the first sight of Italy in Book III:

> Iamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis
> cum procul obscuros collis humilemque videmus
> Italiam. Italiam primus conclamat Achates,
> Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant (3.521–24)
>
> (And now, the stars put to flight, the dawn was growing red, when far off we see dark hills and, low-lying, Italy. 'Italy,' Achates is the first to shout, and, with joyful shouting, the companions greet Italy.)

But this joy and these collective hopes will not come true for Palinurus. His encounter with Italy is lonely, desolate, fatal.

It is one of the saddest touches of the *Aeneid* that the god's prophecy, "You, Palinurus, will be safe on the sea and will arrive at the Ausonian land" (345–46), is fulfilled in the barest, cruellest terms. Palinurus will reach, and yet not reach the land he has so constantly steered for; and this most steadfast, indeed indispensable, companion of the voyage will not know the fruits of his devotion. The reminiscences of *Odyssey* V (of which there are several)[38] deepen his tragedy: with truly Odyssean perseverance he struggles to the end, indeed prevails, only to be cut down. No kindly Athena, no lovely Nausicaa awaits this voyager, only a "savage people" stupidly ready to slaughter for booty a half-naked castaway: . . . *praedamque ignara putasset* (361). He survives the inhuman elements of sea and rock (*maria aspera*, 351; *surgentibus undis*, 354; *summa . . . unda*, 357; *capita aspera montis*, 360), but meets his end in man's greed, violence, stu-

pidity. All the cruelty of fate, all the obstacles of man's own bestiality are reflected in line 361, with its half scornful, half pathetic *ignara*.

This aura of failure and frustration surrounds the Palinurus-episode from its beginning and is an essential part of its meaning. Just before Palinurus appears, Aeneas, designated by an epithet that stresses his own mortality (*Anchisa satus*, 331), sees another reminder of the Trojans who did not reach Italy, his former captains Leucaspis and Orontes, "sad and deprived of the honor of burial" (*maestos et mortis honore carentis*, 333). Their fate and the adjective *maestos* prepare the transition to Palinurus, also *maestus* (340). Aeneas meets them absorbed in gloomy thoughts (332), a situation which both thematically and verbally recalls his reaction to Misenus' death (with 332 compare 156–57).

Palinurus is himself introduced in a characteristically Vergilian manner which sets the tone for the whole episode and for much that follows in Hades:

> hunc ubi vix multa maestum cognovit in umbra,
> sic prior adloquitur (340–41)
>
> (When, with difficulty, Aeneas recognized him, gloomy, in the thick shadow, he addresses him first as follows.)

The interlocking of *maestum* and *umbra*, the significant adverb, *vix*, the presentation of the scene in terms of Aeneas' active perception and initiative (*prior*) all emphasize the feebleness, the indistinctness of the dead. Palinurus is scarcely visible; he and his world are insubstantial, immersed in ineffective grief and shadow. There could be no greater contrast with Aeneas' heroic energy, and the point is made even more concretely afterward in the heaviness of Aeneas in Charon's boat (412ff). This contrast furthers the general contrast between life and death, success and failure in the Book, for all the shades Aeneas meets, up to Elysium, are by their very presence failures, just as Aeneas by his very presence is marked for extraordinary success.

The contrast is made all the more poignant by the fact that Palinurus is only too aware of the divine favor granted Aeneas:

> aut tu, si qua via est, si quam tibi *diva creatrix*
> ostendit (neque enim, credo, *sine numine divum*
> flumina tanta paras Stygiamque innare paludem)... (367–69)
>
> (Or, if there is any path, if your *goddess mother* shows you any,—for it is not, I believe, *without the will of the gods* that you are preparing to swim such streams and the Stygian swamp—....)

Aeneas' divided ancestry is itself another point in the contrast. In first introducing him to the Bough, the Sibyl laid stress upon it (*sate sanguine divum/Tros Anchisiade*, 125–26); and now, just before he discerns his old pilot, she echoes her earlier words: *Anchisa generate, deum certissima proles* ("O begotten of Anchises, most certain offspring of the gods," 322). Palinurus himself first addresses Aeneas by the mortal half of his lineage, *dux Anchisiade* (348; see also *Anchisa satus*, 331), but refers to his divine mother and the help of the gods when he makes his entreaty (367–69). This repetition of Aeneas' ancestry is more than just epic convention or inflation. Along with the appearance of the Golden Bough immediately after (405ff), it underlines the dichotomy central to the Book and deepens the tragic implications of that dichotomy that cluster around Palinurus.

Like Misenus, Palinurus is solaced for his suffering by an "eternal name": *aeternumque locus Palinuri nomen habebit* ("The place will bear the eternal name of Palinurus," 381). But there is a quiet pathos, a sad resignation in Palinurus' condition and his nature which stand at the opposite pole from the heroic violence and *dementia* of Misenus. Hence it is all the more moving when he breaks out into the desperate terms of his request: *da dextram misero et tecum me tolle per undas:*

> quod re per caeli iucundum lumen et auras,
> per genitorem oro, per spes surgentis Iuli,
> eripe me his, invicte, malis; ...
>
> da dextram misero et tecum me tolle per undas,
> sedibus ut saltem placidis in morte quiescam
> (363–65, 370–71)
>
> (Wherefore I entreat you by the joyous light of the sky, by the breezes, by your father and the hopes of rising Iulus, rescue me, you unconquered one, from these sufferings.... Give your right hand to me, unhappy, and take me with you through the waves so that in death I may lie at rest in peaceful places at least.)

Palinurus' speech recalls another wretched suppliant, Achaemenides in III:

> per sidera testor,
> per superos atque hoc caeli spirabile lumen,
> tollite me, Teucri; quascumque abducite terras (3.599–601)
>
> (By the stars I entreat you, by the gods above and the light of this sky whence we breathe, take me off, Trojans; lead me away to any land you please.)

There the humanity of Anchises and the Trojans was deeply stirred, and they granted the request. Here, lest Aeneas' pity violate the laws of the Underworld, the Sibyl answers for him: "Whence, O Palinurus, this strange, dark desire" (373).

Yet the boldness of Palinurus' request is tempered by the mildness and pathos of his motive and his situation. The pathos is increased not only by the parallel with Achaemenides, but also by the ironic reversal implied in *tecum me tolle per undas*: the old pilot, Aeneas' guide through so many seas, asks to be taken "through the waves." He feels even Hades with a sailor's mind. Line 371, his explanation for his prayer—*sedibus ut saltem placidis in morte quiescam*—has the same sad tone as that which ends his account of his death: *nunc me fluctus habet versantque in litore venti* ("Now the waves hold me and winds toss me about on the shore," 362), the same tone too as that which begins his entreaty *per caeli iucundum lumen et auras* (363). This juxtaposition of his own death in 362 with the remote beauty of what Aeneas still enjoys, "the joyous light of the sky and the breezes" (363), further expands the terms of the contrast and deepens its emotional intensity. Vergil has obviously given much care to elaborating this contrast. He has created a beautiful unity of style, structure, and character. The noble simplicity of line 362, *nunc me fluctus habet* . . . , and the resigned pathos of 371, *sedibus ut saltem placidis in morte quiescam*, are among the finest effects of the *Aeneid*.

But this carefully built sympathy crashes stridently against the Sibyl's cold reproof: *Unde haec, O Palinure, tibi tam dira cupido* (373). In her divine justice reasserts itself against human pity. We have been prepared in advance for her justice, for the last words of Palinurus' appeal in 371, *sedibus ut saltem placidis in morte quiescam*, echo the Sibyl's prior exposition of the laws of Hades:

> nec ripas datur horrendas et rauca fluenta
> transportare prius quam *sedibus* ossa *quierunt* (327–28)
>
> (Nor is it given to cross the fearful banks and the harshly sounding streams before the bones have *grown quiet in their place*.)

But the sharpness of the Sibyl's rebuke, whatever its justice, only adds to the bitterness of Palinurus' fate.

This bitterness is enhanced by another irony. Palinurus is asking Aeneas to violate the laws of the Underworld when Aeneas' very presence, as his further progress (405ff), constitutes a remarkable violation of those same laws. How remarkable a violation it is is brought home by the fact that the Sibyl's reproachful *tam dira cupido* to Palinurus are almost the same words she used to Aeneas when he asked to defy the laws of nature and descend to his father:

> quod si tantus amor menti, si *tanta cupido* est
> bis Stygios innare lacus . . . (133–34)
>
> (But if your mind has such love, such desire, to swim twice the Stygian lakes. . . .)

Aeneas' *cupido* can be fulfilled as Palinurus' cannot.

Aeneas himself is not allowed to address Palinurus. He utters not a word of consolation to his companion. Palinurus seems in fact to form a kind of preliminary trial of Aeneas. He seeks to persuade Aeneas to violate the laws of Hades, the very order of the universe. And he would bind him to the emotional ties of the past when Aeneas is entering upon a larger scheme of destiny.

Vergil is nevertheless true to the reality and intensity of these ties in presenting Palinurus so sympathetically. Hence he does not permit the consolation which Palinurus does receive to mollify too much the pain of his death. As in the Misenus episode, the reward is of a weighty and austere formality, solemn with the language of Roman ritual:

> nam tua finitimi, longe lateque per urbes
> prodigiis acti caelestibus, ossa piabunt
> et statuent tumulum et tumulo sollemnia mittent,
> aeternumque locus Palinuri nomen habebit (378–81)
>
> (For the neighboring peoples through cities far and wide, driven by omens from the heavens, will make expiatory offerings for your bones and will set up a burial mound and will send to the mound regular sacrifices, and the place will have forever the name of Palinurus.)

The distant, elaborate promise contrasts with the pathetic immediacy and the modesty of Palinurus' own request, *sedibus ut saltem placidis in morte quiescam* (362). The Sibyl does soften the formality of her consolation with a gentler recognition of the hardness of Palinurus' lot: *duri solacia casus* (377). But the two lines which close the episode mark a qualification of a different sort:

> his dictis curae emotae pulsusque parumper
> corde dolor tristi; gaudet cognomine terrae (382–83)
>
> (At these words his cares were moved away and grief was driven from his heart for a little while; he rejoices in the name of the land.)

Parumper is the vital word.[39] Palinurus is consoled only "for a little while." His tale ends with a flicker of joy (*gaudet*, 383) amid heavy sadness (*dolor tristi*) that does not dispel the gloomy shadows with which it began (*multa maestum . . . in umbra*, 340).

As in the case of Misenus, the consolation that history can give is not necessarily what the individual wants. That would involve a violation of the laws of the universe, a transcending of life and

death such as Aeneas, himself half divine, possesses in the magical Bough. As far as concerns individual suffering, these laws are as inexorable as the *inremeabilis unda* (425) of Hades itself. They yield only when an individual, like Aeneas, acts in obedience to powers far beyond himself. But the greatness of the *Aeneid* lies precisely in the poet's sensitivity to the tragedy of their intransigence.

In Palinurus we come close to the heart of Vergil's tragic sense; and hence his importance in Book VI. It is with Aeneas' tears over Palinurus—*sic fatur lacrimans*—that the Book began;[10] and Palinurus is the first of the shades with whom Aeneas has to reckon. He is unable to cope with the intensity of his old pilot's grief; and his silence here reminds one of his silence before Dido in Book IV (437–449). Led by the stern Sibyl as he was before led by the commands of Jupiter, Aeneas must pass beyond the suffering that stands in his path. Yet the Bough which makes his passage possible is both the token of his extraordinary success and a reminder of the basic conditions of life and death to which Daedalus, Misenus, and Palinurus are so poignantly subject. With the aid of the Bough, Aeneas will also obtain his initial request (6.106–109) and reach his father. Here he does become at last more than a merely silent auditor. But his ties with his own mortality and humanity are reestablished at the very moment when his historical mission is revealed to him in its grandest sweep. These two aspects of Aeneas, participation and silence, feeling and obedience (cf. *mens immota manet* . . . , 4. 449), are intimately related to the dichotomies posed by the Golden Bough and by the entire poem: on the one hand the inconsolable fact of personal suffering, and on the other the historical achievement that extends beyond the person into eternity and yet is strangely less than the sum of the individual tragedies of which it is built.

This is the first of two related articles on the sixth Aeneid by Professor Segal. The second will appear in the next issue.

NOTES

[1] Brooks Otis, *Virgil* (Oxford 1963) p. 1, points up the problem, but places the emphasis primarily on style: "We must, I think, see in this instruction and this uncertainty more than the morbid doubts of a perfectionist or the ostentatious modesty of one who secretly expected his wish to be ignored. . . . Virgil felt he could not let it [the *Aeneid*] out into the world without the most elaborate revision."

[2] See, *inter alios*, R. A. Brooks, "*Discolor Aura*. Reflections on the Golden Bough," *AJP* 74 (1953) 260–80; W. Clausen, "An Interpretation of the *Aeneid*," *HSCP* 68 (1964) 137–47; L. A. MacKay, "Hero and Theme in the *Aeneid*," *TAPA* 94 (1963) 157–66; Adam Parry, "The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*," *Arion* II. 4 (1963) 66–80; and most recently M. C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965) esp. chap. 4 (available to me only after my own ms. had been completed). Putnam's remarks on the closing scene of the poem (pp. 190 ff) are especially relevant to the question of Vergil's "pessimism." For a balanced statement of the opposite view see T. S. Eliot, "Virgil and the Christian World" (1951) and F. Klingner, "Virgil und die geschichtliche Welt," *Römische Geisteswelt*, ed. 3 (Munich 1956) 275–93, though note Klingner's remarks on the "border situation" ("Grenzsituation") of Vergil's age, between collapse and renewal, pp. 278 ff.

[3] C. G. Heyne, Excursus I of his commentary on Aen. VI.

[4] For a convenient summary of modern interpretations of the Bough, see H. E. Butler, *The Sixth Book of the Aeneid* (Oxford 1920) 111–13.

[5] For these categories (with slightly different terminology) see B. Otis, "Three Problems of *Aeneid* 6," *TAPA* 90 (1959) 165 ff; L. A. MacKay, "Three Levels of Meaning in *Aeneid* VI," *TAPA* 86 (1955) 180 ff, esp. 188.

[6] Otis (preceding note); see also Putnam (above, note 2) 118.

[7] K. Büchner, "P. Vergilius Maro," *RE* VIII A 2 (1958) 1384.

[8] So for example Sabbadini, who regarded lines 149–52, 156–89, 212–36 as later additions. But Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro, Aeneis, Buch VI* (Leipzig 1903) 177, firmly rejects this approach.

[9] On *Iuno inferna* and Dido see Cyril Bailey, *Religion in Virgil* (Oxford 1935) 132.

[10] Conington-Nettleship, edd., *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, ed. 4 (London 1884) II 443.

[11] Norden (above, note 8) p. 169 with note 3.

[12] See *ibid.*, 171.

[13] For a discussion of the relation between the Bough and the beginning of VIII see Putnam (above, note 2) 119 ff.

[14] Norden (above, note 8) 188. Older commentators attempted to explain the phrase by looking for a second meaning of *aura*. Heyne, *ad loc.*, cites G. 2. 47, *luminis auras;* but *auras* is probably the inferior reading there. Nettleship even went so far as to posit two different words, *aura* meaning "air," and *aura* meaning "light." Conington (above, note 10) *ad loc.* was probably looking in the right direction when he stressed "the connexion between the notions of light and air . . . and also between those of light and motion . . . , the gleaming light being naturally identified with the flickering breeze."

[15] On the Bough and the mistletoe see Norden (above, note 8) 162 ff; Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, part VII, vol. II, "Balder the Beautiful" (London 1913) *passim*, esp. chaps. 9 and 12. See also Bailey (above, note 9) 269.

[16] Frazer (preceding note) 283.

[17] For the importance of the solstice and the magical powers of the Bough and the mistletoe see *ibid.* 290–93; Norden (above, note 8) 164–65.

[18] Frazer (above, note 15) 84.

[19] R. S. Conway, "The Golden Bough," *Harvard Lectures on the Vergilian Age* (Cambridge, Mass. 1928) 41–53, esp. 48.

[20] Brooks (above, note 2) 271.

[21] *Ibid.* 278.

[22] Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934: reprint, New York 1958) 127.

[23] *Ibid.* 128. Miss Bodkin's tendency toward subjectivization runs into the same difficulties in her interpretation of Dante's underworld. Thus she couples the Angel of *Inferno* ix with Vergil's Golden Bough as "alike symbols of the poet's gift of visionary power" (p. 129). Yet surely Dante's Angel is more than a subjective symbol. He is also a concrete manifestation of God's help, the visible and tangible *presence* of divine grace which interferes unexpectedly and supernaturally to further the journey when the pilgrim has reached an impasse. Hence the effect which the Angel produces:

> E noi movemmo i piedi in ver la terra
> sicuri appresso le parole sante (103–4).

[24] For the contradictions involved in *cunctantem* and a convenient summary of attempts at resolution see John D'Arms, "Vergil's *cunctantem* (*ramum*): *Aeneid* 6.211," *CJ* 59 (1964) 265 ff.

[25] Frazer (above, note 15) 294.

[26] Photius, on the authority of Didymus; cited in Norden (above, note 8) 169.

[27] The contrast between the Sibyl's words and Circe's is pointed out in less detail by Brooks (above, note 2) 267–68. Circe does, however, dwell concretely on the horrors of Hades before Odysseus' descent (*Od.* 10.509 ff), so that Vergil's departure from Homer is perhaps not so striking as might at first appear. He has transferred and condensed the motif rather than altered it completely.

[28] Norden (above, note 8) 159.

[29] *Ibid.*, 193. But Norden is unjustified in regarding Vergil's lines on Misenus (234–35) as just an aetiological note and no more. The parallels he cites to buttress this interpretation (*Aen.* 1.367, 10.143 ff, etc.) are hardly to the point, since they are *only* parenthetical additions and not closely connected with the tragic substance of the narrative, as is the Misenus passage here. Closer are 6.381 and 7.2 discussed below in parts III and V of this essay.

[30] Otis, *Virgil* 287–88, has some good remarks on the contrast between the Golden Bough ("life from death") and Misenus ("ordinary death"). He stresses the "polluted" quality of Misenus' death as "a symbol of the soiled mortality common to all the profane."

[31] On the Homeric echoes in the burial of Misenus see Norden (above, note 8) on lines 177 and 179 ff (pp. 182–84). The burial of Hector (to which Norden does not refer) is probably also relevant: compare *Iliad* 24. 782–84 with *Aen.* 6.179–82).

[32] Brooks (above, note 2) 275.

[33] For a convenient review of the scholarship on Daedalus and the labyrinth see P. J. Enk in *Mnemosyne*, Series 4, vol. 11 (1958) 322–30.

[34] Otis, *Virgil*, 285.

[35] Note too that the temple Aeneas promises to found will be not of gold, but of marble, *solido de marmore templum*, 6.69, a phrase which recalls the dedication to Augustus in G. 3.13, *templum de marmore ponam*. Perhaps the marble in *Aen.* 6 is meant to point out of the "realms of gold"—myth, divinity, eternity—to the solid "reality" of history and fact. Compare the legend of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, which passed through mythical stages from laurel to wax to bronze and finally to stone: Pausanias, 10.5.9 ff and Pindar, *Paean* VIII, frag. 52i (Snell).

[36] Most recently Otis, *Virgil*, p. 292: "This is a discrepancy that Virgil would have ironed out in revision." See the criticism in my review, "The Achievement of Vergil," *Arion*, IV. 1 (1964).

[37] On Palinurus and the giving up of the sea and wandering see M. C. J. Putnam, "Unity and Design in *Aeneid* V," *HSCP* 66 (1962) 227 ff.

[38] With line 357 cf. *Od.* 5.392; with 360, Od. 5.428. Other parallels in Norden (above, note 8) 228.

[39] Servius took *parumper* to mean "little by little" (*paulatim laetari coepit*); and while he recognizes the "abstractness" of the consolation offered to Palinurus (*spem enim solam, non praesens acceperat beneficium*), he seems to de-emphasize the tragic aspect of the situation: *quasi ab eo magna moderatione dolor recessit*. Norden's translation ("Das Wort vertrieb *für eine kurze Weile* / Aus seinem Herzen allen Schmerz und Gram") seems truer to the complexity and sadness of the passage.

[40] Most modern editors rightly reject Servius' statement on 5.871, that Vergil intended VI to begin with *obvertunt pelago proras* (6.3), the present division being due to Varius and Tucca. For a highly probable explanation of Servius' remark see the convincing and lucid note of Norden on 6.1f (p. 110).