

IS THE *AENEID* A TROJAN HORSE?

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Contents

The relationship between artist and subject	2
The Trojan Horse as a model for the <i>Aeneid</i>	6
Another model for the <i>Aeneid</i> : Daedalus' labyrinth	9
Would anyone do something like this?	10
The battle of the critics	12
The style of a heroic epic poem – new elements added by Virgil	19
Some additional arguments that Virgil, in the <i>Aeneid</i> , was anti-Augustan	19
Antecedents in Virgil's other writings	21
Final comments	22
FOOTNOTES	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29

Interpreters of the *Aeneid* do not agree on much, but they will agree that this poem has been fundamentally misinterpreted by more people than any other poem in history. In reading a range of critical writings on the poem, it is hard to believe that everyone is writing about the same work. In this paper, I suggest a novel interpretation of the poem that, in a sense, can help to reconcile the conflicting claims, namely that Virgil's praise of Augustus is entirely a lie, a hoax, a misleading trick similar to the function of the Trojan Horse, which is described in Book 2. That is, the *Aeneid* is a poisonous gift to Augustus, ostensibly a glorification but in fact critical, and that Virgil deliberately wrote his poem as a Trojan Horse. Thus, the confusion and disputes about the meaning of the poem are precisely what Virgil intended. I do not expect everyone who reads this to be immediately convinced. There is no proof, only circumstantial evidence. However, considering all of the facts, this hypothesis seems to me to be the best explanation of Virgil's intention.

The relationship between artist and subject

Virgil and Augustus (whose real name was Octavian) had a long, close personal relationship. The nature of this relationship must be understood in order to understand the purpose of the *Aeneid*. It can be argued that we will never understand this relationship; still, we must try. Before Augustus had gained control of the Roman government, Virgil was established as one of the greatest Latin poets. As Augustus became more powerful, he was intent on having his reign glorified through architecture, sculpture and literature. He made a major effort to recruit the best artists of his age to work for his purposes. His methods were the usual rewards and punishments. Augustus wanted an epic poem glorifying his reign, partly in order to match the cultural achievements of ancient Athens. He wanted Virgil to write this poem.¹ He gave Virgil many substantial gifts, including an estate in the country. In fact, Virgil was supported by Augustus for most of his adult life. Virgil must have appreciated these gifts, but what did he really think of his patron?

Levi writes in his biography of Virgil, “The grandeur of Augustus was a terrifying presence even to his friends, and Virgil trod as carefully as Horace”.² It might also be suggested that absolute loyalty to a politician/tyrant was basically not compatible with Virgil’s intellectual nature. We must at least consider the possibility that Virgil had mixed feelings about his project.

Virgil worked on the *Aeneid* for 11 years. Although it does not appear to be incomplete in a significant way, Virgil said that 3 more years were required in order to complete it. He died, at age nearly 52, before this could be done. Based on information from Suetonius,³ who wrote about 100 years after Virgil died, Virgil met Augustus in Greece, basically by coincidence, and shortly afterwards became sick. Augustus brought the dying man back to Italy on his ship. At his death, Virgil wanted the manuscript destroyed, presumably because he considered it unfinished. This is attested to by early historians and is generally accepted.⁴ Despite a few unfinished lines, the work is basically complete, so why would Virgil have wanted it destroyed? On one’s deathbed, ideas which seemed important may not still appear so important. Thus, Sforza, who is discussed further below, suggested that Virgil felt remorse at his unrelenting criticism of Augustus, especially since Augustus had been solicitous of his health during that last illness.⁵ On the other hand, Levi suggested that Virgil felt remorse for the opposite reason, that he had been too flattering of Augustus, which would reflect poorly on the intellectual independence of Virgil himself. Levi wrote: “he [Virgil] lied shamelessly about the battle of Actium [in the shield of Aeneas]... In particular he reverses the roles of Augustus and Agrippa.” Levi also suggested, in regard to Virgil’s deathbed request, “Can it have been the whole commission, some philosophic scruple about the whole idea of the *Aeneid*, some resentment of pressure from Augustus.”⁶ I suggest another possibility: this was the final trick of the poet. By stating that he wished the poem to be destroyed, he was attempting to ensure that Augustus would preserve it, via what we might call reverse psychology. This is clearly speculative, but what is indisputably true is this: the publication of the *Aeneid* was under the control of Augustus. He could have destroyed the manuscript, and, at an earlier time, he could have had Virgil executed, and he

would have done these things if he had decided that the poem was really anti-Augustan, and that Virgil was attempting to deceive him.

In any case, Virgil's request was overruled by Augustus, who published the manuscript immediately, with much fanfare. Augustus had read (or listened to Virgil read) parts but not all of the *Aeneid*. Augustus frequently asked Virgil if progress was being made with the manuscript, and it was widely known that Virgil was working on this project. Augustus decided that, overall, the ideas that he wanted to be expressed were present: his descent from Trojan nobility, his descent also from the goddess Venus, and the support of Jupiter and the other gods for the establishment of the Roman Empire and his position as Emperor. There was sufficient praise of Augustus and Rome. Augustus was also pleased that a Latin epic had been created, comparable to the Homeric epics. These were the aspects of the poem that Augustus emphasized. Once he had made his decision, it is not likely that any of his advisors would have disputed it. Augustus must have realized that there were other elements in the poem that appeared to express a negative attitude towards Aeneas, and thus towards Rome and himself, but these could be tolerated, especially considering that the *Iliad* also contained bizarre episodes and heroes who were frequently unheroic. Augustus' view remained the dominant opinion for approximately 2,000 years. My encyclopedia, published in 1989, describes the *Aeneid* in this way: "the national epic of ancient Rome... one of the world's greatest poems of heroic adventure... Virgil chose the myth of the Trojan hero Aeneas to express ancient Rome's moral and religious values and to honor Augustus, who was believed to be Aeneas' descendant."⁷ This was and largely continues to be the conventional view.

Some critics, however, who have increased in number in the past 65 years, have emphasized the pessimism of the poem, the unnecessary death and violence, including suicides, and also the invasion of a relatively peaceful Italy by the self-aggrandizing Trojans. Moreover, the entire journey of Aeneas seems nightmarish, with death and destruction left in his wake. I discuss this subject in some detail below. Both elements are certainly present. Imagine Virgil's caution in revealing his poem to Augustus and to others. He knew that there are sections that would make people wonder about his sincerity. Readers in Virgil's

day were at least as sensitive to nuance as those today. If any of Virgil's contemporaries had said, as many modern critics have said, that the poem is basically anti-Augustan, there would have been trouble. Augustus would have felt that he was tricked, mocked and betrayed. Virgil used several strategies in an attempt to protect himself from such accusations. His primary strategy was to write sections consisting of effusive praise of Augustus and Roman history, interspersed with the longer pessimistic sections. The sections of praise, even though they might be opposed by other sections, do exist, and might seem more persuasive than the negative sections because they are generally more straightforward. To minimize the significance of these sections is really to question Virgil's sincerity, which is what I am doing.

Virgil probably did not read the entire manuscript to Augustus, so the sections that were read were no doubt selected carefully. It is known from Suetonius that Virgil read at least parts of Books 2, 4 and 6, including the section on the death of Marcellus, Augustus's nephew,⁸ which occurs near the end of Book 6. These sections would most please Augustus. After the section on Marcellus, Book 6 ends with a short section on the departure of Aeneas from the underworld, famously through the gate of false dreams. The question is, did Virgil read to Augustus the part about the false dreams, just to finish Book 6? It seems very unlikely to me. One could argue that the section on false dreams may not have been written at that time. We don't know, but Virgil undoubtedly knew that he would refer to false dreams immediately after Anchises' lengthy description of the Roman future and Roman greatness. I like to picture that key moment, in which Virgil said he would stop there, close to the end of Book 6, well knowing what came next. If he had read about the false dreams to Augustus, imagine what Augustus' reaction would have been. Virgil well knew that he was living dangerously. What was Augustus' reaction when he finally did read this section? To agree with this scenario is to agree that Virgil was being deceptive. Similarly, I suggest that Virgil did not feel safe in publishing his poem while he was alive, since some readers might have become suspicious of his intentions. The consequence was his endless revisions of a poem that would never be finished. The few lines that were not rhythmically completed may have been purposely left unfinished.

But these basic strategies were not enough. Virgil's monumental task was to write an anti-Augustan poem that would be interpreted by Augustus and his coterie to be pro-Augustan. His basic approach was to make his poem ambiguous, so complex that no one could be sure what he was saying. Negative ideas were buried in the plot, hidden beneath intentional inconsistencies. There are famous inconsistencies in the poem, sometimes considered to be "mistakes" that supposedly Virgil would have "corrected" if he had finished the poem. I think these are intentional, to provide a cloud of uncertainty about his meaning. In his book of 1990,⁹ O'Hara stated, "inconsistency is a deliberate narrative device." For example, a Harpy predicts that the Trojans, after they reach Italy, will be starving, and will be compelled by hunger to eat their tables (3.224-5). Later, Aeneas mistakenly recalls that his father Anchises made this prediction (7.98-104). O'Hara's book has a section entitled "Deception in the Worlds of Aeneas and Virgil", and writes more generally of "the role of deception in the rhetoric, religion and politics of Virgil's day". He described multiple deceptions in the poem: Aeneas and Turnus were both deceived by the gods, Venus was deceived by Jupiter, and the reader is deceived by Virgil. He concluded, "the simple but eloquent message of Augustan propaganda is colored by more complex speculation on the truthfulness of that message." He implies, but does not suggest explicitly, that Augustus was being deceived.

The Trojan Horse as a model for the *Aeneid*

How did the Trojan Horse work? Building it, and having Greeks hide inside, was relatively simple. The difficulty was getting the Trojans to bring the Horse inside the walls of their city. If this did not happen, nothing would be achieved. Virgil explained in detail how the Trojans were tricked into bringing the Horse into their city, a story which he apparently invented himself (2.12-247). After the Greeks pretended to leave on their ships, leaving the Horse as a "gift" to the Trojans, whom they had battled unsuccessfully for 10 years, the Trojans came down to the shore and wondered about the significance of the Horse. Then

there appeared a Greek trickster, Sinon, having considerable acting talent and also considerable courage (like Virgil). What he explained to the gullible Trojans was that he had fled from the Greeks because they were intending to kill him as a human sacrifice, in order to induce the gods to provide favorable winds for their voyage home. He had been chosen as the victim by Odysseus, because he had accused Odysseus of killing Sinon's companion and protector, Palamedes, in a political dispute. (Palamedes, incidentally, was considered to be the inventor of most of the letters of the Greek alphabet, according to some stories, perhaps significant to Virgil.¹⁰) This fabrication was intended to gain the trust of the Trojans, and it was successful. He next said, "I will tell you everything, O King [Priam], no matter what happens to me – and all the truth. And I do not deny that I am Greek – this first of all! If Fortune has made Sinon a wretch, nonetheless, though she is wicked, she will not leave me without honor, will not make me a liar." He proceeded to provide "secret" information about the Horse. The Greeks had purposefully made it too large to fit through the gates of Troy. This was to ensure that it would not be taken into the city, because the Greek's priest had explained to them that if the Trojans destroyed the Horse where it was, then the Greeks would return and eventually destroy Troy. However, if the Horse was brought into the city, then the Trojans would eventually destroy the Greeks. The explanation for this was that the Horse was a gift to Athena, and therefore the behavior of the gods would depend on how the Horse was treated. This preposterous story was accepted by the Trojans. As explained by Aeneas (who was describing the events to Dido), "Through such deception, and the skill of the lying Sinon, we believed it all. We were taken in by his deceits and his pretended tears."

One other event then occurred which confirmed the Trojans' decision. The Trojan priest Laocoön had been outspoken in being suspicious of the Horse, and was opposed to bringing it inside Troy. In fact, he had previously suggested: that "the Achaeans [may] hide concealed in the horse". After Sinon's speech, two huge snakes swam in from the sea and killed Laocoön and his two sons. This was interpreted as a message from the gods that Laocoön had angered them, and that the Horse therefore should be brought into the city. The Trojans, unfortunately for them, did not appreciate the fact that, although some

gods were on their side, others were not. So, the Trojans moved the Horse into their city, which required dismantling of part of the gate.

The key question, for our present purpose, is why this event is even included in the poem? It is not in any way required for the plot of the *Aeneid*, which could have more naturally begun with the battle inside Troy (in Book 2, after the introductory material of Book 1). Even if the Horse was mentioned briefly, it was not necessary to describe in detail how the Trojans were tricked into bringing it inside their city. I propose that the inclusion of this event, in such detail, was intended to suggest to the reader that Virgil was interested in such trickery, and to provide a clue to Virgil's deceitful plan. Just as the Greeks needed to trick the Trojans into bringing the Horse inside their city, Virgil had to convince Augustus that his epic was pro-Augustan, while really being poisonous to him, as the Horse was fatal to the Trojans. The name Sinon is interesting in being similar to Siron (also called Siro), an Epicurean philosopher and Virgil's revered teacher.¹¹ This may suggest a similarity of Sinon and Virgil.

Imagine the fear of the Greeks hiding inside the horse, before it was brought inside the city. They could have been easily killed if Laocoön's warning had been heeded. Virgil's trepidation would have been similar. Augustus' suspicion could mean his death and the destruction of his poem. The difference, of course, is that Virgil and Augustus were living people, while the Trojan horse was only an imaginary literary creation.

Along this line, we should consider Virgil's attitude towards Odysseus, the great trickster. Aeneas, and the other Trojans, despised Odysseus for his tricks, for his deceitfulness. Powell, in a footnote to his translation of the *Aeneid*, stated that "Ulysses [Odysseus] typifies all that is rotten and deceitful in Greek culture, a thorough bad guy in Roman myth."¹² The Romans believed that one is behaving at a higher moral level by attacking and killing his enemies in an open and straightforward way. Aeneas and other Trojans disparage Odysseus repeatedly (2.680, 3.239, 6.467-8). But would Virgil agree with this? The Greeks, in general, admired Odysseus for his quintessential Greek cleverness, although he was sometimes portrayed as calculating and ruthless. Many Romans would also have admired Odysseus for the same

reason. Virgil, with his brilliant intellect, must have admired Odysseus, especially in contrast to his plodding hero Aeneas.

Another model for the *Aeneid*: Daedalus' labyrinth

Daedalus, legendary inventor, creator and artist, represents another analogy for Virgil himself. He created wings for himself and his son Icarus to escape from an island prison; he created the labyrinth in which the Minotaur was housed, and he created the wooden cow in which Pasiphaë, the Cretan queen, disguised herself so that she would be impregnated by a white bull that she desired (resulting in the birth of the Minotaur). More prosaically, he built the temple of Apollo which Aeneas visited on the way to the underworld. The labyrinth is referred to several times in the *Aeneid*, most importantly at the beginning of Book 6, where the engraved gold door of the temple is described (6. 17-30). Panels represent incidents in the life of Daedalus, but following the description of the door is an unusual, striking passage in which Virgil expresses intentions that were in the mind of Daedalus as he was engraving the doors, which are not displayed on the doors themselves. Moreover, at an even higher level of omniscience and empathy, Virgil himself speaks directly to Icarus, who died tragically during the escape of his father and himself. He says sympathetically to Icarus: "And you, too, would have had a large / part in so great a work of art, Icarus, if grief had allowed it! Twice / Daedalus tried to show your fall in gold; twice your father's hands fell." How could Virgil have known this? What is the significance of the fact that he did? These lines remind the reader that an artist can have thoughts or emotions that are not expressed. The reason for the lack of expression can vary. In the case of Daedalus, it was grief, which prevented his hands from making what he intended to make. Another possible cause might be the fear of punishment. This dramatic representation of hidden thoughts that are not expressed directly provides a hint of the meaning of the *Aeneid* as a whole. The grief of Daedalus at the fall of Icarus into the sea, which he was unable to express, may be analogous to Virgil's grief at the fall of the Roman Republic. In addition, I think the labyrinth is

intended to provide an analogy to the *Aeneid* itself: an infinitely complex maze, or puzzle, that cannot be figured out. That is, the *Aeneid* was deliberately written to be ambiguous, even contradictory, and impossible to interpret in a straightforward way. Thus, Virgil is identified with Daedalus in three ways: as a creator, as an artist having an immense personal grief that cannot be expressed, and as the designer of a labyrinth.

Putnam analyzed the Daedalus-Virgil relationship in 1987 (republished in 1995).¹³ His article, in a remarkable, almost uncanny way coincides with my Trojan Horse hypothesis. He focused on the deception of Daedalus, exemplified by the wooden cow. Admittedly, Daedalus was only deceiving a bull, yet this was not a minor achievement. Putnam speaks of “Virgil-Daedalus”, and says that Daedalus’ “is an inventiveness which articulates subterfuge and doubleness.” Furthermore, “in detail and in general the constancy of deceit in the story line of *Aeneid* 1-4 finds its parallel in the exploits of Daedalus as artificer”, but in this case it seems that, according to Putnam, it is the characters in the *Aeneid*, rather than the readers, who are being deceived. Finally, “the wooden horse....is, save for the shield of Aeneas, the single most memorable artifact in the *Aeneid*, notable for its Daedalian duplicity and duality.” Then, “As objects, both cow and horse are marvelous on the outside, deceptive on the inside. They can, even should, be viewed as Virgil’s epic can be read.” That is, I think, the *Aeneid* is really anti-Augustan while feigning to be pro-Augustan. That statement is almost implying that the *Aeneid* is a Trojan Horse, but without stating it explicitly.

Would anyone do something like this?

Would anyone devote this level of effort to a hoax such as I am suggesting? Certainly, not many people would do this, and even fewer would be in a position to do it, and have the ability to do it successfully. However, for Virgil it might be considered a reasonable decision. He was among the leading poets of his time, and was financially secure (due to the gifts from Augustus). He could have refused the “assignment”

from Augustus. However, the writing itself was a technical and artistic challenge that would have appealed to Virgil. Few poets could have even attempted this, but Virgil knew that he was capable. What was much more difficult was to be so deceptive as to mean the opposite of what he appeared to be saying. My suggestion is that Virgil saw this also as a challenge. No one had written a hoax epic that criticized the person (who was the all-powerful emperor) that he pretended to praise. With his immense knowledge and intellect, Virgil felt that he understood humanity better than anyone, and certainly better than the emperor whom he pretended to serve. We would not disagree with Virgil's assessment of his own abilities. His goal was to, almost like a god, manipulate the reaction of readers of his work. He certainly must have imagined that there would be certain readers who would figure out what his true intentions were, although he probably did not imagine that it would take so long before they would appear.

A key factor for Virgil, in working on this strange project, was probably the great esteem of the Greeks and their Roman imitators for trickery. This is demonstrated in the epics that Virgil was emulating. Odysseus succeeded in many impressive tricks. One of the best was telling the Cyclops Polyphemus that his name was "Noman". Therefore, when Polyphemus called his tribe to assist him, after being blinded, he exclaimed that "no man" was attacking him, which of course induced the others to return home.¹⁴ Most clever of all, of course, was the Trojan Horse, which enabled the Greeks to defeat the Trojans, which they were otherwise unable to do.

We must also consider Virgil's concern for his reputation. It is a fact that Virgil, Horace and other Latin poets were supported financially by large gifts from Augustus, and moreover had frequent social interactions with him. For this reason, they have frequently been considered to be sycophants, propagandistic spokesmen for Augustus. This label as flatterers insulted and defiled them, and they tried repeatedly to assert their independence, not entirely successfully. Lucian wrote about 200 years later, "flattery is considered the most servile - consequently therefore the worst - of all the vices."¹⁵ Alexander Pope wrote, in 1738, in a fake epitaph for himself: "Heroes, and Kings! Your distance keep:/In peace let one poor Poet Sleep, /Who never flatter'd Folks like you:/Let Horace blush, and Virgil too."¹⁶ Virgil

dangerously inserted hidden criticism of Augustus within ostensible praise, thereby expressing his ethical independence while fooling Augustus, Alexander Pope, and many others.

Frank criticism of the Augustan regime was not possible in the time in which Virgil lived. Tacitus wrote in *Annals*, not long afterwards, that competent historians were prevented from writing a true history of Augustus' reign "by the prevailing spirit of fear, flattery and abasement." In *Histories*, Tacitus wrote that "after Actium,...the historic character [meaning an honest study and understanding of history] disappeared, and genius died by the same blow that ended public liberty. Truth was reduced to the last gasp... Adulation began to spread her baneful influence, and a rooted hatred of their ambitious masters rankled in the breast of numbers... The care of transmitting due information to posterity was utterly lost."¹⁷ Thus, Virgil was expressing his anti-Augustan sentiments in the only manner possible, and even this was extremely dangerous. In a reference to Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Weinbrot described the opinion of Gibbon: that educated Romans despised Augustus and the other Emperors even as they pretended to adulate them; that "it is reasonable to assume, as Gibbon might have seen it, that every compliment to the achievements of the divine Augustus was an inverted curse on that tyrant who gained authority first by his own vile nature and the army he controlled, and then by the gradual destruction of the balanced constitution that once made Rome great."¹⁸

The battle of the critics

While less bloody than the battle between the Trojan emigrants and the Italians, the battle between the scholars who favor pro-Augustan or anti-Augustan interpretations of the *Aeneid* has been equally intense.¹⁹ In a sense, there are two separate questions which seem to be often conflated. First, what is our opinion of Augustus and the empire he established? Second, what was Virgil's opinion regarding the same. In this article, I am really concerned with question 2, and not with question 1, yet it seems impossible to prevent question 1 from sometimes intruding. More specifically, it is clear that most critics

who believe that Virgil was anti-Augustan are also anti-Augustan themselves, and the converse is also true. (While question 1 is a question of historical interpretation, and basically outside my area of concern, it is one of the fundamental questions of Western civilization: were the founding Caesars justified in destroying the Republic? Are the heroes Julius and Augustus or, alternatively, the assassins Brutus and Cassius? Should we change the names of our summer months?) For convenience, I will subsequently refer to critics who support a pro-Augustan interpretation of the *Aeneid* as “pro-Augustan”, and the converse for “anti-Augustan”.

As described above, the pro-Augustan view was the original interpretation (established by Augustus and his coterie) just after the poem was published, and it is still widely held. Thus, in the Introduction to his new translation of the *Aeneid*,²⁰ Powell states that “This poem is dedicated to his [Augustus’] power and his place in the world.” Also, “Virgil’s myths are purposeful propaganda, aimed at proving that Augustus deserved his place in the world and that Rome’s destiny in history was willed by divine intelligence.” However, based on approximately 60 years of influential opposition writings, the anti-Augustan interpretation currently appears to represent the majority opinion among scholars, at least in the United States (which does not mean that it is correct). My Trojan Horse hypothesis may be considered to be the extreme end of the anti-Augustan spectrum. The pro-Augustan camp is still active.²¹ Some of the pro-Augustans, however, question whether Virgil achieved what he was attempting. Thus, Otis wrote, “The defect of the last six books really consists in the fact that Virgil succeeded in the second intention [to do justice to Aeneas’ opponents] and, on the whole, failed in the first [to represent Aeneas as a Roman hero, an Augustus who waged war in the interest of peace and a higher order of civilization].”²² Such caveats, which are not uncommonly expressed, call for a re-examination of Virgil’s intentions.

Two key factors are not adequately discussed by many of the anti-Augustan critics. First, what is the meaning and the role of the pro-Augustan rhetoric, mainly in Books 2, 6 and 8? The basic question is, was the praise of Rome and Augustus genuine, or a facade? My opinion is that the latter is correct. However, it might be argued that the poem contains conflicting statements which are not resolved because

they cannot be resolved, and reflect the complexities of human culture, or humanness (which has elements that are both good and bad, from the viewpoint of an intellectual scholar). The second factor is that, if the view of Aeneas, Rome and Augustus is so bleak as is stated by the anti-Augustan camp, what would have been the reaction of Augustus himself, and his coterie. As noted above, Virgil was emphatically not writing in an ivory tower, protected by academic freedom. Augustus wanted a poem of glorification; he did not want a poem about the fallible nature of man, defeat and destruction, and the emptiness of Roman grandeur. If Augustus had believed that Virgil was strongly critical of the Roman Empire, as believed by many critics of the past 60 years, then Augustus would have rightfully believed that Virgil was mocking him, Virgil would have been killed, and his poem destroyed. We must assume that readers at the time of initial publication understood the poem at least as well as those 2,000 years later (although, of course, they were not as free to express their opinions). Virgil understood his situation, and therefore it must be accepted that, if Virgil's view was in fact anti-Augustan, he had to intentionally hide his true meaning behind a pro-Augustan front. This deception had to be effective enough so that Virgil could disavow his true meaning, if necessary.

As an example of this issue, consider the interpretation of Boyle.²³ After arguing that Virgil was vehemently opposed to Augustus and the tyranny of the Roman Empire, Boyle stated, "Virgil could not have been more clear....it is Virgil's concern to emphasize that it [the final triumph of Aeneas] is a victory for the forces of non-reason and the triumph not of *pietas* but of *furor*." However, if Virgil had been "clear" about this meaning, it would have brought on the consequences described above. Thus, if this was Virgil's message, he could not have expressed it clearly.

Quinn wrote an article with the provocative title, "Did Virgil Fail?" in 1972.²⁴ He argued that Virgil had two conflicting purposes in writing his poem, which probably altered with time, and that these two purposes were never, and probably could not be, reconciled. That is, Virgil was praising Augustus but also criticizing some aspects of the Roman Empire, and of Augustus himself. Quinn's suggestion of Virgil's motives, which is speculative but useful, is that the poem was begun as a paean to Augustus, and

then changed course as it was being written, to become less militaristic and more humanistic. Virgil began to realize that “the degree of honesty he aimed at, while it might satisfy his conscience and spell success for his poem with a more reflecting audience, made it unacceptable to others – above all to Augustus himself.” Thus, the poem became inconsistent within itself. This interpretation seems less likely to me than others.

The anti-Augustan interpretation is often based on the overall pessimistic view of humanity expressed by Virgil (in the opinion of many critics), as famously described by Tennyson in the 19th century: “Thou majestic in thy sadness/at the doubtful doom of human kind” (from the poem entitled “To Virgil”). This attitude was perhaps most vividly expressed by Boyle in 1972²⁵ and Johnson in 1976 in his book *Darkness Visible*.²⁶ Johnson wrote of “the indefinable larger despair that haunts the entire poem and threatens to overwhelm it,” and said that “Reality dwindles to dream, and the nightmare from which we have been fighting free throughout the poem has become the reality.” He ultimately reached a very weakly optimistic conclusion, although optimism is probably too strong a word: “Virgil’s poetry can let us ponder for ourselves what society, justice and being mean because it has closed with and faced what their absence is and means.” Johnson attempted to reconcile his view of the meaning of the poem with the praise of Augustus and Rome with the statement, “it is clearly impossible to ignore Virgil’s very real (if qualified) admiration for Augustus.” Can this really be considered admiration, if humanity has been brought into a nightmare?

A generally similar statement of the pessimism of the *Aeneid* was presented earlier, in 1953, by Brooks. His statement of the overall meaning of the poem: “Man does not fit in history.” Brooks also stated, “neither the hero nor the poet ever comes to terms with the ends which are so easily postulated and so desperately sought throughout the poem.”²⁷ But is it true (or likely) that Virgil never “comes to terms” with the conflicts within his poem? There are many other descriptions of the *Aeneid* with which Augustus would not have been pleased.²⁸

Many anti-Augustan critics focus on the end of the poem, feeling that Aeneas' savage killing of Turnus is not compatible with a glorious Roma hero, more specifically with the mercy that is supposed to be displayed.²⁹ This view was disputed by Galinsky, who maintained that Aeneas' anger and rage at the conclusion was not only justified but expected.³⁰ My opinion is that, given all the battlefield deaths that previously occurred, and the lack of mercy in previous killings (which would not be expected), it would have been surprising if Aeneas had spared Turnus. On the other hand, previous epics had endings that represented a resolution, or at least a partial reconciliation, even after rivers of blood. The *Iliad* had a display of empathy and respect for the enemy. The *Odyssey* had a strange, contrived ending, but it marked an end to the violence and the establishment of peace. What is most unsettling about the end of the *Aeneid* is not the killing of Turnus, but that it occurs at the very end of the poem. In a poem glorifying Roman imposition of civilization and peace, there should have been a final reconciliation between the combatants, including probably a marriage scene. This would have been what Augustus wanted. Admittedly, given the preceding events, especially the suicide of Queen Amata and the attack of Aeneas on the city of Latinus (both of which did not have to happen), such a reconciliation would have been awkward. What is true is that the violent killing of Turnus, in the last sentence of the poem, leaves the reader questioning the glory of Roman history.

Thomas demonstrated the subterfuge of Virgil, the hidden negativity within ostensible praise, even within the most panegyric sections of the poem, such as the description of Aeneas' shield, and Anchises' description of the Roman future from the Underworld.³¹ Certainly Virgil was sending secret messages. But Thomas preferred to talk of 'ambivalence', and uses the milder term "non-Augustan" rather than "anti-Augustan". This choice, he says, "allows for a duality, even a conflict, and this makes it true to the poetry of Virgil, as many would agree." Perhaps, but it is also sometimes the case that one side is false, and the other is true.

The article by Sforza,³² from 1935, has a viewpoint most similar to my own. His work has no citations, which may be partly why it is rarely cited. I will utilize the later description by Quinn:³³ Sforza “argued that Virgil was emotionally committed to the opposition to Augustus, and either sabotaged his own poem or made it a kind of concealed accusation of Augustus.” Sforza began by asking the fundamental question, “Was Virgil sincere in his praise of Augustus and of the Eternal City?” His conclusion was that he was not. He suggested that Virgil was “feigning scrupulously” in writing his Roman epic. Furthermore, he described Virgil’s strategy, since he had been forced to write the Augustan epic, as follows: “To brutal force he opposed craft. He had no other means of asserting his principles and avenging the crushed liberty of his country.” Virgil was “camouflaging his attacks”, and writing “the most virulent libel ever written against Rome and its rule.” He claimed that “The hatred of Virgil towards the prime ancestor of the despot of the day is so intense that it is practically impossible to find a passage, where Aeneas appears, that does not in some way indict him with dastardly, criminal, or stupid actions.” I agree with this, basically, but Virgil could not make his criticism so open as these comments imply. Virgil’s criticism is always hidden behind a facade, always subtle. Certainly, Virgil’s criticism of Augustus would have been much more “virulent” if he had been free to say candidly what he wanted to say. My hypothesis supports Sforza’s arguments in suggesting that the *Aeneid* was deliberately created as a Trojan Horse, and in suggesting that, by including the detailed description of the trickery required to make the Trojan Horse effective (to convince the Trojans to bring it inside their walls), Virgil provided a clue into his own intentions

Quinn discussed Sforza’s article at some length, first stating that “Virgilian criticism has never fully recovered” from it, then continuing that “the case is one that can really only be made by heavy-handed misconstructions of the ambiguities and implications characteristic of any sensitive poetic structure. Many would still agree with Professor Maguinness that “the problem raised by Sforza is not by any means an unreal one, though his own solution is so paradoxical as to be most improbable *a priori*.”” *A priori*, we would not expect Virgil to devote eleven years to writing a deceptive, poisonous epic about

the establishment of the Roman Empire. Something like this was never done before, and has not been done since. However, I have argued that this is precisely what Virgil did, and moreover that this interpretation, in fact, explains the many “ambiguities and implications” that cannot be convincingly explained in any other way. Johnson described Sforza’s article in this way: “Some of the emphases of [the anti-Augustan critics] are wildly adumbrated, almost as if a caricature”.³⁴ In fact, the views of Sforza are largely consistent with the views of Johnson and others in his camp, but what Sforza added is his emphasis on Virgil’s thoughts and intentions, which might be criticized by some as speculative, but which is simply necessary in order to understand the poem.

R.D. Williams wrote “Changing Attitudes to Virgil”³⁵, in 1969, which summarized opinions from the time of Augustus through the 19th century. He cited many strongly negative comments regarding the character of Aeneas, for being unheroic and worse, from the 18th and 19th century, reminiscent of more contemporary comments such as those of Parry that were referred to above. Virgil was being criticized by these interpreters for creating a defective hero, since it was assumed that Virgil himself believed that Aeneas was in fact heroic. Williams argued that Aeneas was genuinely heroic, but that he was a different type of hero from what many readers expected, a Roman, Augustan, pious type of hero who was not appreciated by the Romantic poets. Neither Williams nor the Romantic poets considered the possibility that Virgil was himself criticizing Aeneas, and his alter ego Augustus, through his characterization. Williams concluded with a statement similar to the comments by Quinn and by Otis that were described above: “In some ways of course the *Aeneid* achieves unity; but perhaps it was a sense of failure in his urge to harmonize the discordant, to reconcile the opposites, that caused Virgil on his deathbed to ask Augustus to see that the *Aeneid* was burned.”

The style of a heroic epic poem – new elements added by Virgil

The most prominent difference between the *Aeneid* and earlier epics is the insertion of commentary on current political events, namely the reign of Augustus. Such propaganda (or descriptions of the future which has already occurred, if you prefer) seems starkly out of place in a mock-ancient epic. Virgil could have written just the story of Aeneas, without the description of the future, and the poem as a Roman epic would have been improved. So, the question is, why was such material included?³⁶ One likely answer seems to be that Augustus liked that sort of praise, as well as statues of himself and political honors. Augustus' own writings on his accomplishments, the *Res Gestae*, make that clear. From our perspective, these sections of adulation also had another purpose, namely to disguise the fact that the poem was really anti-Augustan. In fact, that may have been the main purpose of including them. Virgil knew that he would be reading parts of his manuscript to Augustus: these sections of praise were perfectly suited for those occasions. Thus, the inclusion of this contemporary political commentary in the poem might be considered to be evidence that they are insincere.

Some additional arguments that Virgil, in the *Aeneid*, was anti-Augustan

Much evidence on this point was presented above, and was also discussed in greater detail by Thomas.³⁷ What Thomas did which is especially persuasive was to analyze translations of the poem in which meanings were intentionally altered by translators in order to express the opposite of what Virgil had written, because the translators had decided that this is what Virgil must have meant. Such corruptions prove that there were problems with the interpretation of the poem, and that critics have been confused. The plot is filled with events, major and minor, that are unflattering to Aeneas, one after another. A few of many possible examples: 1) The first stop of Aeneas' party after they leave Troy is Thrace, where Aeneas pulls up some plants, randomly, and finds that the roots are dripping human blood (because a Trojan, was

murdered and buried in that spot) (3.21-56). This certainly seems like a bad omen.³⁸ 2) The encounter with the Harpies, in which the Trojans steal and kill cattle, and consequently are attacked and cursed (3.184-232). 3) The episode in which the Trojan women burn their own ships, because they don't want to travel any farther (5.515-594). Jupiter put out the fires by producing rain, so that subsequent, greater disasters could ensue. Why is all of this in the poem, since it certainly reflects poorly on Aeneas and his plan? The book is filled with such dissonances, and reading it is like being in a nightmare, as proposed by Johnson,³⁹ even Kafkaesque. Even the sections that are most eulogizing towards Aeneas, Augustus and Rome contain disturbing elements. In the speech of Anchises to Aeneas in the Underworld, in which Anchises describes the future glory of Rome, the following is included: (6.721-722 "There is Mummius,... famed because of all the Greeks he's killed." (He demolished the major Greek city of Corinth, to terrorize and intimidate the Greeks.) In the middle of this speech there is a different type of statement, which is straightforward, and seems likely, perhaps, to express Virgil's sentiments. Anchises speaks for the first time directly to his Roman descendants (6.737-741): "My children, do not become accustomed in spirit to such great wars, and do not turn the powerful strength of your country against itself. You be the first to stop – you who take your race from Olympus. Cast the sword from your hand, you who are of my blood." This was directed at Julius Caesar, but applies equally well to Augustus. These lines are almost buried in a section that exalts Roman conquests, but they stand out dramatically.

Similar strangeness is maintained in some of the modern commentary on the poem. Thus, Powell, in the Introduction to his new translation,⁴⁰ after stating that "This poem is dedicated to his [Augustus'] power and his place in the world," at the end of this section says: "Now not law but naked power would have the final say." He later states, "There will always be disagreement about the *Aeneid's* tone and purpose. Augustus did not want a stupid celebration of his glory, and Virgil has not celebrated him stupidly. Life is not simple or straightforward, and neither is Virgil's great poem." My opinion is that, while Augustus may not have wanted a stupid celebration of his glory (although this could be disputed), he probably did not want so complex a poem, filled with hidden meanings, as he got.

Antecedents in Virgil's other writings

Earlier writings of Virgil have this same quality of meaning the opposite of what is said, partly for the same reasons. Virgil early in his career entered a political environment in which it was dangerous to say directly what he wanted to say, so that sometimes his real meaning had to be hidden. Useful examples are *Eclogues* 1 and 4. *Eclogue* 1 is a simple dialogue between 2 farmers, one of whom had his property confiscated in order to give it to a retired soldier. The other farmer's property was not taken, because he went to Augustus and appealed to him. Much of the dialogue consists of praise of Augustus from the fortunate farmer. However, the plight of the second, who evidently did not appeal, provides a clear but indirect criticism of the unfairness of the land confiscation program, which was initiated by Augustus. So, this is an example of subtle criticism of Augustus that, at first glance, seems to be praise.⁴¹

Eclogue 4 provides another example of the indirect and subtle way in which Virgil expressed his opinions,⁴² although it does not apply to Augustus (probably). This was written for the birth of a socially important son (the exact child is controversial, and this may have been intentionally left ambiguous). The poem begins with grandiose predictions of how this child will change the world for the better. However, halfway through, the tone of the poem changes drastically, and Virgil expresses obvious comical exaggeration of what the child will accomplish: for example, in the Golden Age which he will bring about, sheep will have wool that is naturally colored, so that it doesn't need to be dyed. This farcical part of the poem implies that the wonderful changes that had been described are not going to happen. That is, the first half of *Eclogue* 4 is not meant to be taken literally, and the poem as a whole describes a fantasy that will never happen, because it is inconsistent with reality (more specifically, with human nature). In the case of *Eclogue* 4, Virgil did not need to disguise his true meaning completely (although the poem was still misinterpreted by many readers who liked the first part but didn't understand the second part).

What do these two *Eclogues* have in common with the *Aeneid*? In all three, there is effusive praise which is not really meant, which is insincere. One of the great talents of Virgil is to be so emotionally

convincing that we believe him even when he is lying (like Sinon talking about the Trojan Horse). But Virgil managed to convey his true meaning indirectly.⁴³

Final comments

In retrospect, it might be suggested that interpretation of the *Aeneid* had to pass through several historical stages: After first focusing on the glorification of the Roman Empire, which was emphasized by Augustus, the innate pessimism of the poem was gradually recognized, by most of the interpreters mentioned above. The final step is the appreciation of Virgil's deception (although Sforza saw most things clearly in 1935). No one should be embarrassed for misinterpreting the poem, since Virgil's intention was to mislead and confuse; mistaken interpretations should be considered as testaments to Virgil's skill in disguising his true meaning. In general, the strongest evidence for the Trojan Horse hypothesis is simply that, with this interpretation, all of the "problems" of the poem disappear, and we suddenly see clearly what Virgil was doing in each episode, in each word. Ultimately, we see that the type of government that Virgil extolled, indirectly, was not the absolute tyranny of the Empire but rather the Roman Republic, which had existed for nearly 500 years, and was still functioning (albeit not so well) when Virgil was born.

Does this interpretation diminish Virgil's accomplishment? Just the opposite. What Virgil did was entirely unique, misleading not only his original readers but thousands of subsequent readers, to accept an interpretation of his poem that was the opposite of what he meant. This accomplishment seems almost unimaginable, and is unlikely to ever be repeated. Virgil's immense talent was probably strengthened and sharpened by the fact that he was unable to say directly what he thought, upon penalty of death. Thus, this complex, devious form of expression was the only manner in which he could say what he wanted to say. The dramatic climax of the *Odyssey* is the transformation of the beggar, when he stands up, strings the bow that no one else could string, and is revealed as Odysseus.⁴⁴ The transformation of Virgil, given the

interpretation described herein, is equally dramatic, from a servile flatterer to a courageous man speaking his mind. Moreover, unlike Odysseus, Virgil was not an imaginary character, but rather a living person in a hostile, threatening environment.

This viewpoint changes drastically our understanding of all of the events described in the *Aeneid*. No longer can we describe Virgil as “majestic in thy sadness / At the doubtful doom of humankind.” The doubtful doom of humankind is still present, but the poem now becomes an affirmation of the value of an individual voice of reason and virtue in a world of violence and dishonesty. Such an expression of humanism cannot directly defeat the power of armies, but it does establish that there is another way in which humans can think and act, using reason and justice and fairness to solve disputes and to distribute the gifts of nature. What Virgil did is to prove that this path will always be available, even in an environment which is most hostile to it. The fact that Virgil could write this poem, with the courage and cleverness that was required, although it may not provide much encouragement for the future of mankind, provides the greatest possible encouragement for an isolated virtuous man to cherish his ethical values and to state (albeit indirectly) what he believes. I don’t know of any statement in history that compares to this. Such a statement does not create an empire or peace, but establishes the potential and significance of human reason and virtue. Thus, the poem is a paean not to Augustus and Rome, but rather to human intellectual freedom, and also, not insignificantly, to human cleverness. I would agree with Sforza’s conclusion that “Virgil's poem is a passionate vindication of Liberty, and the most sublime hymn to spiritual and political Freedom ever sung.”⁴⁵

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FOOTNOTES

I thank Leah Kronenberg for her inspiration, encouragement and advice, and for her rare, Didonian level of generosity. The translation of the *Aeneid* is by B.B. Powell (New York, 2016).

¹ The assignment given by Augustus to Virgil was discussed by K. Quinn, *Virgil's Aeneid* (Ann Arbor, 1968), 26-34.

² P. Levi, *Virgil: His Life and Times* (New York, 1998), 132.

³ Suetonius, *De Poetis* 442-459, translation from J.C. Rolfe, *Suetonius*, volume 2, (Cambridge, MA 1997).

⁴ Quinn (n. 1), 24.

⁵ F. Sforza, "The Problem of Virgil". CR 49 (1935), 97-108. It has also been suggested, without any evidence, that Virgil was poisoned by Augustus, for reasons that will become evident.

⁶ Levi (n. 2), 227.

⁷ The World Book Encyclopedia (Chicago, 1989).

⁸ Suetonius (n. 3), 451.

⁹ J.J. O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy in Virgil's Aeneid* (Princeton, 1990), 143, then 90, then 129. O'Hara made another suggestion that suggests a new level of complexity, 172: "close reading of Virgil's prophecies shows his painful awareness – which the shrewd Augustus may have shared – that this could be just an illusion, just a fantasy, ...just a false dream [referring clearly to the gate from Hades]". That is, Augustus may have been fully aware of Virgil's subversive meanings, but accepted it, and perhaps even appreciated it, knowing that he could manipulate the response of the critics and the public during his lifetime, and that it would not affect his reign. O'Hara further stated, 177: "Modern critics who argue or assume that the prophecies and other optimistic sections of the *Aeneid* were written simply as a foil or to satisfy expectations or to please readers of slower wit than ours have gone too far. It must have been part of the plan of the *Aeneid* for the reader to suspect or to hope or believe for a while

that the prophecies of Rome are true, and accurate, and justified in their surface optimism.’ I don’t agree. How long is “a while”, and what is the reader supposed to conclude after that “while” is over.

¹⁰ B.B. Powell (tr), *Vergil’s Aeneid*. (New York, 2016), 66 n.

¹¹ Levi (n. 2), 22.

¹² Powell (n. 10), 63 n.

¹³ M.C.J. Putnam, *Virgil’s Aeneid*, (Chapel Hill, NC 1995), 76-82.

¹⁴ Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.408-15, translation from A.T. Murray and G.E. Dimock, *The Odyssey* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).

¹⁵ Lucian, *Apology for the “Salaried Posts in Great Houses”*, 205, translation from K. Kilburn, *Lucian* volume 6 (Cambridge, MA, 1959).

¹⁶ Cited by H.D. Weinbrot, *Augustus Caesar in “Augustan” England* (Princeton, 1978), 120.

¹⁷ Cited by Weinbrot (n. 16), 69-70.

¹⁸ Weinbrot (n. 16), 107.

¹⁹ For those who enjoy academic fights, read the book by R.F. Thomas: *Virgil and the Augustan Reception*, (Cambridge, UK 2001). and the lengthy review of the book by K. Galinsky: ‘Clothes for the Emperor’ *Arion* 10 (2003), 143-169. What is indicated by the title of the book is that, according to Thomas, Virgil’s meaning and the Augustan reception of what he wrote are very different, and largely opposed to each other.

²⁰ Powell (n. 10), 1, then 24.

²¹ See H-P. Stahl, *Poetry Underpinning Power: Virgil’s Aeneid: The Epic for Emperor Augustus* (Swansea, Wales, 2016).

²² B. Otis, “The Originality of the Aeneid”, in D. R. Dudley (ed.), *Virgil* (New York, 1969), 63-64.

²³ A.J. Boyle, “The Meaning of the Aeneid, part I.” *Ramus* 1 (1972), 85.

²⁴ K. Quinn, “Did Virgil Fail?”, in H. Bloom (ed.) *Virgil (Modern Critical Views)* (New York, 1986), 73-84 (first published in 1972 in another collection of articles).

²⁵ Boyle (n.23) 63-90 and A.J. Boyle “The Meaning of the *Aeneid*, part II.” *Ramus* 1 (1972), 113-151.

²⁶ W.R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible* (Berkeley, CA, 1976), 98, then 154, then 15. Other emphatic statements are 114: “Aeneas and Turnus, like the other characters in the poem, inhabit a world where the brighter the shining of glory or prophecy, the surer and the more terrible the darkness will be;” 140: “the dark forces of social corruption have not been dissipated and the realities of human savagery and selfishness remain;” 99: “It is the perfect flowering of the Virgilian imagination, this perfect representation of the monstrous and unreasoning night.”

²⁷ R.A. Brooks, “*Discolor Aura: Reflections on the Golden Bough*” *AJP* 74 (1953), 260-280.

²⁸ For example, A. Parry, “The two voices of Virgil’s *Aeneid*”, *Arion* 2 (1963), 66-80: “As he [Aeneas] makes his way through the first six books, we see him successively divested of every personal quality which makes a man into a hero.” Furthermore, “Virgil continually insists on the public glory of the Roman achievement, the establishment of peace and order and civilization...But he insists equally on the terrible price one must pay for this glory. More than blood, sweat and tears, something more precious is continually being lost by the necessary process; human freedom, love, personal loyalty, all the qualities which the heroes of Homer represent, are lost in the service of what is grand, monumental and impersonal: the Roman State.” Parry also stated, “Aeneas moves through the world of the dead. He listens...to the famous Roman policy speech of Anchises, a speech full of eagles and trumpets and a speech renouncing the very things Virgil as a man prized most.” Another example is W. Clausen, “An interpretation of the *Aeneid*” *HSCP* 68 (1964), 139-147: “Virgil values the achievements of Rome – there are proud lines (vi.847-853) in which he renounces every claim for Rome save that to imperial grandeur – and yet he remains aware of the inevitable suffering and loss: it is this perception of Roman history as a long Pyrrhic victory of the human spirit that makes Virgil his country’s truest historian.” He also stated, “But there is another reason why the *Aeneid* moves us; its larger structure enlists our sympathies on the side of loneliness, suffering, defeat. It is the paradox of the *Aeneid*, the surprise of its greatness, that a

poem which celebrates the achievement of a national hero and the founding of Rome itself should be such a long history of defeat and loss.” It’s fortunate that Augustus never heard interpretations like these. Additional clearly explained examples of hidden anti-Augustan messages are provided by R.O.A.M. Lyne, *Further Voices in Virgil’s Aeneid*, (Oxford, 1987). J.T. Dyson, *King of the Wood*. (Norman, OK, 2001), 130, 139, and 157, described the meaning of the *Aeneid* as yet more sinister, suggesting that Virgil is comparing Augustus to a murderous king. Augustus, in fact, achieved his position by murdering his competitors, and then by murdering many others who seemed to threaten his position. Dyson presented the evidence that Augustus killed 300 senators and knights after the battle of Perusia.

²⁹ See M.C.J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid* (Cambridge, MA 1965), 192: “The tragedy of the destruction of Turnus and his world does much to negate any romantic notion of the *Aeneid* as an ideal vision of the greatness of Augustan Rome, and it negates, too, the image of Virgil as its poet-laureate.” Also, “only the most superficial reading of the *Aeneid* as a whole can find in its hero a model of Augustus or, more unfortunately still, a glorification of the accomplishments of Rome through his character and life.”

³⁰ K. Galinsky, “The Anger of Aeneas” *AJP* 9 (1988), 321-348.

³¹ Thomas (n. 19). 2-7, then 12. Probably the most striking example from Thomas is his discussion of the phrase always translated as: “This is the man...., Augustus Caesar..., who will again establish a Golden Age for Latium in the fields which Saturn once ruled.” Thomas argued that this should probably be translated as: ‘this is the man...Augustus Caesar...., who will again close out ages of gold in Latium, through fields once ruled by Saturn.’ Thomas argued that, at least, there is ambiguity, and that it must be intentional ambiguity by Virgil. In this one line, we see an example of what Virgil has done throughout the book, creating a labyrinth of meaning.

³² Sforza, (n. 5). These arguments were later elaborated in a book: F. Sforza, *Il più prezioso tesoro spirituale d’Italia—L’Eneide* (Milan, 1952).

³³ Quinn (n. 24), 75-6.

³⁴ Johnson (n. 26), 156 n.10.

³⁵ R.D. Williams, "Changing Attitudes to Virgil", in D.R. Dudley (ed.), *Virgil* (New York, 1969), 119-138.

³⁶ Quinn (n. 1), p 34-58, suggested that what Augustus initially wanted was just a poem about himself, with the climax being the battle of Actium, and that Virgil chose to focus on the story of Aeneas.

³⁷ Thomas (n. 19).

³⁸ Dyson (n. 28), 36-38.

³⁹ Johnson (n. 26).

⁴⁰ Powell (n. 10), 1, then 28.

⁴¹ Supported by A.J. Boyle, *The Chaonian dove: studies in the Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid of Virgil* (London, 1986), 15-19.

⁴² Discussed by T.K. Hubbard, "Intertextual Hermeneutics in Virgil's Fourth and Fifth *Eclogues*", *CJ* 91 (1995), 13-19.

⁴³ Putnam (n. 13), 79 described the *Eclogues*: "Certainly no other poems in Latin, with their many layers of symbolism and multivalent masquerades, could more justly claim the epithets fictive and ambiguous. The rich history of pastoral poetry as a vehicle for necessary indirection of statement looks back in honor to its primarily Virgilian source." Although he considered that Virgil moves from "poet as implicit deceiver [in *Eclogues*] to poet as implicit pitier [in the *Aeneid*]", it might be expected that both ambiguity and indirection of statement would be found in the *Aeneid* as well.

⁴⁴ Homer, *Odyssey*, (n.14), 21.404-30.

⁴⁵ Sforza (n. 5). 108.

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