

NONDUM PROSERPINA ABSTULERAT : PERSEPHONE IN THE *AENEID*

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Résumé. – Perséphone, déesse des enfers n’apparaît guère dans le corpus virgilien bien qu’elle ait le rôle de personnage uniformisant lors des exploits de l’auteur et qu’elle soit une compagne d’importance dans sa description d’Orphée à la fois dans l’*Enéide* et dans les *Géorgiques*. La reine des enfers figure finalement comme le troisième personnage d’une série de sacrifices manqués par Aeneas. La Furie Allecto répond à la tentative du héros troyen d’apaiser la mère des Furies et son effort pour calmer Junon révèle la réalité ethnographique de la suppression de Troie et de l’ascendance de l’Italie. Son offrande à Perséphone se révèle vaine et sans effet au vu de l’adhésion de Virgile à l’eschatologie lucretienne.

Abstract. – The underworld goddess Persephone appears infrequently in the Virgilian corpus, but serves as a key unifying figure in the poet’s achievement, an important companion to his depiction of Orpheus in both the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics*. Hell’s queen ultimately figures as the third figure in a series of failed sacrifices attempted by Aeneas. The Trojan hero’s attempt to placate the mother of the Furies is answered with the Fury Allecto ; his effort to conciliate Juno brings the ethnographic reality of Troy’s suppression and Italy’s ascendance, and his offering to Persephone is revealed as vain and without effect in light of Virgil’s allegiance to Lucretian eschatology.

Mots-clés. – *Aeneid*, Persephone, Elysium, Golden Bough, Orpheus, Dido.

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Hell's queen Persephone makes but few appearances in Virgil's *Aeneid*, but the poet's mention of the goddess in Books IV and VI of his epic serves in part to clarify several important themes that unfold through the first, Odyssean half of the narrative, themes that reach full fruition only in the second, Iliadic half of the drama¹. We shall examine closely the presence of Persephone in the *Aeneid*, as well as her framing appearances in Books I and IV of Virgil's *Georgics*, with a view to understanding how Virgil uses the daughter of Zeus and bride of Hades as a key unifying figure in the divine apparatus of his poetic corpus.

A first consideration must be the very name of the goddess, Persephone or Proserpina² ? Both the Greek and the Latinized forms of the name appear in Augustan poetry ; Virgil (so also Horace) uses only *Proserpina*, though in the *Culex* (261) she is *Persephone*³.

The daughter of Ceres first appears by name in the *Aeneid* near the end of the fourth book, in the poignant coda⁴ the poet appends to the suicide of Dido (IV, 693-705)⁵. Juno sends the rainbow goddess Iris to snip a lock of the Carthaginian queen's hair as an offering for Dis, so that the suffering Dido may at last rest peacefully in death, for

1. On Persephone/Proserpina in Virgil, note I. COLOMBO, « Proserpina » in the *Enciclopedia Virgiliana IV* (1988), pp. 324-7, and P. BOYANCE, *La religion de Virgile*, Paris 1963, pp. 160-162 (who collects and examines the evidence for the connections of the goddess with Orphism and the Eleusinian Mysteries, and provides additional bibliographical resources) ; for Roman accounts of the abduction, note N. RICHARDSON, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Oxford 1974, p. 77. There are several useful references to Persephone's appearances in the Virgilian *Nachleben* in T. BURKARD *et al.* eds., *Vestigia Vergiliana : Vergil-Rezeption in der Neuzeit*, Berlin-New York 2010. Ovid's use of Virgil's depiction of Proserpina (and Orpheus) is discussed by M. VIELBERG, « *Omnia mutantur, nihil interit ? Vergils Katabasis und die Jenseitsvorstellungen in Ovids Metamorphosen* » in S. FREUND, M. VIELBERG eds., *Vergil und das Antike Epos*, Stuttgart 2008, pp. 321-337. Both forms of the name, Greek and Latinized, appear in Augustan poetry ; Virgil uses only *Proserpina*, but she is better known as Persephone. I am grateful for the very helpful remarks of the two anonymous readers who greatly improved this study.

2. For the name Proserpina and *proserpere*, see M. PASCHALIS, *Virgil's Aeneid : Semantic Relations and Proper Names*, Oxford 1997, p. 213.

3. This may be a clue to the authenticity of the work ; in the immediate context, Persephone leads a group of heroines (Alcestis, Penelope, Eurydice). *Persephone* also appears at Propertius, 2.28.47, Ps.-Tib., 3.5.5, Luc., *Pharsalia*, 6.700, Ov., *Heroides*, 21.46, *Metamorphoses*, 5.471, 10.730, *Fasti*, 4.452, 483, 579, 591, and Stat., *Thebaid*, 4.478, 12.276, 277. *Proserpina* is cited in Ennius and Naevius, as well as Hor., *Carm.*, 1.28.20, 2.13.21, *Ep.*, 17.2, *Sermones*, 2.5.110, Grat., *Cynegetica*, 373, Ov., *Metamorphoses*, 5.391, 506, 531, 556, *Fasti*, 4.587, Sen., *Hercules Furens*, 550, Stat., *Thebaid*, 1.111, 8.10, 98, *Silvae*, 2.6.102, Val., *Argonautica*, 5.345, Mar., *ep.*, 3.43.3, 12.52.13, Sil., *Punica*, 13.546, and is the normal prose orthography. Ovid, the most important author for the study of the goddess in Latin poetry after Virgil, thus uses both names fairly indiscriminately.

4. J. PERRET *ad loc.* : « Le lecteur n'attendait pas ces derniers développements : avec les v. 667-671, 672-687 tout semblait conclu ; les scènes d'agonie sont étrangères aux stylisations de l'épopée comme de la tragédie. Le pathétique provient ici de la peinture d'efforts pénibles, incertains dans leur visée, toujours décevants, bien représentatifs de la vie déchirée de la pauvre Didon ». See further A. CARTAULT, *L'art de Virgile dans l'Énéide*, Paris 1926, pp. 336-9.

5. On this scene note especially W. KUHN, *Götterszenen bei Vergil*, Heidelberg 1976, p. 76.

*nondum illi flavum Proserpina vertice crinem
abstulerat Stygioque caput damnaverat Orco.* (IV, 698-699)⁶

Persephone, the poet notes, had not yet cut a lock of Dido's blond hair and marked her down, in essence, as the possession of Stygian Orcus. Virgil does not say that Proserpina had no intention of performing the rite of infernal tonsure⁷; he merely says it had not yet happened, and the context makes clear that Dido's death agonies were prolonged – Persephone was apparently in no hurry to execute her office, because, the poet notes, Dido was dying before her time, and not, significantly, in accord with the decrees of fate (IV, 696-697 *nam quia nec fato merita nec morte peribat, / sed misera ante diem subitoque accensa furore*)⁸. Persephone is the infernal Juno (VI, 138), but here, it is the heavenly Juno herself who will intervene through her messenger avatar Iris to usurp Persephone's purview⁹.

The act of snipping the hair from the dying as a token of consecration to the underworld can be found in Euripides' *Alcestis* (72-76), where it is not Persephone but Thanatos who performs the act¹⁰. This liturgical feature of ancient requiems may be referenced at Horace, *Carm.*, I, 28.19-20 *nullum / saeva caput Proserpina fugit*, though the parallel is not exact, and the Horatian passage need not refer to the snipping of hair¹¹. Iris serves as Juno's avatar in *Aeneid* IV (in contrast to Mercury's service to Jupiter at IV, 219 ff.)¹². If Euripides borrowed

6. All quotes from Virgil's *Aeneid* are taken from G. CONTE, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis*, Berlin-New York 2009.

7. Austin *ad loc.* notes that Bailey (*Religion in Virgil*, Oxford 1935, pp. 246 ff.) thought that Virgil invented the conceit that Persephone could not cut the lock of hair from the prematurely dead. But he may have invented her rôle in the whole act.

8. For exhaustive commentary on the Greek parallels (especially Euripidean) that lurk behind the cutting of the hair and the rest of the scene, see A. PEASE, *Publi Vergili Maronis Aeneidos Liber Quartus*, Cambridge 1935, pp. 532-537.

9. The contrast between the grim proceedings and the « luminous » appearance of the goddesses' interventions is highlighted by L.-A. CONSTANS, *L'Énéide de Virgile : Étude et analyse*, Paris s.d. 1930, pp. 152-3.

10. See Dale *ad loc.* for the (scant) extant evidence of the practice and its origins.

11. Nisbet and Hubbard here (*A Commentary on Horace, Odes I*, Oxford 1970), as Newlands (Cambridge 2011) *ad Stat.*, *Silvae* II, 1.147 *iam complexa manu crinem tenet infera Iuno*, mention the parallel scenes but do not address interpretative implications of the act.

12. Iris may be the avatar of the goddess, but arguably Aeneas was the proximate cause of Dido's suicide; his culpability may be underscored by the connection between *Aeneid* VI, 460 and *Cat.*, *Carm.*, 66.39, where Virgil links the departure of Aeneas from Carthage with the severing of a lock of Berenice's hair. The correspondence is studied by R. DREW GRIFFITHS, « Catullus' *Coma Berenices* and Aeneas' Farewell to Dido », *TAPhA* 125, 1995, pp. 47-59. Griffiths sees a connection between the cutting of the lock and the Homeric Achilles, who cuts his hair in mourning for Patroclus. This interpretation would provide another example of Virgil's concern to foreshadow the loss of Pallas, the Patroclus of the *Aeneid*, in Book X; see further my « *Harum Unam* : Dido's Requiem for Pallas », *Latomus* 63, 2004, pp. 857-63, and especially my « *Seraque terrifici* : Archery, Fire, and the Enigmatic Portent of *Aeneid* V » in C. DEROUX ed., *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History XV*, Bruxelles 2010, pp. 196-218.

the idea of Thanatos' snipping a lock of a dying person's hair from Phrynichus' *Alcestis*, and if Phrynichus invented the whole conceit, then perhaps we may wonder if Virgil invented the idea of having Proserpina do the deed in the case of Dido's death¹³.

This scene of Persephone's non-involvement with Dido's immortal obsequies is recalled in Virgil's underworld book, when the Delphic Sibyl describes the Golden Bough that must be plucked as an offering for the infernal goddess :

*hoc (i.e., the Bough) sibi pulchra suum ferri Proserpina munus
instituit.* (VI, 142-143)

The Bough is essential for entrance to the lower world (VI, 140-141) ; there is always another Bough that appears once the previous one is removed (143-144). The Golden Bough must be presented as a gift for Proserpina, just as a lock of Dido's blond hair is required for her soul to be consigned to Orcus¹⁴. Juno hastens the cutting of Dido's golden locks, just as Venus will assist with the finding of the Golden Bough. The epic's two rival goddess are responsible for the production of the respective golden tokens¹⁵. Dido's shade will be a source of suffering for Aeneas in the underworld (VI, 450-476), and it will be Juno, the implacable enemy of the Trojans, who hastens the arrival of said shade to the lower regions.

The lock at the end of IV foreshadows the Bough of VI¹⁶. The Bough is an offering for Proserpina, which is left fixed at the entrance to the goddess' Tartarean abode, which the Sibyl and Aeneas do not enter (VI, 635-637)¹⁷. The Golden Bough is thus in Aeneas' and the Sibyl's

13. That is, for her husband Pluto ; on Orcus, see G. CASERTANO, « Orco » in the *EV III* (1987), pp. 878-879, and Horsfall ad II, 398. It is impossible to determine the priority of either *Aeneid IV* or Horace, *Carm.*, I, 28 with certainty ; Horace may have borrowed the idea of Virgil, and certainly Statius followed suit.

14. For the color of Dido's hair, see R. EDGEWORTH, *The Colors of the Aeneid*, New York-Frankfurt am Main 1992, pp. 114-115, 127, and (on *flavus* in particular) 128-129 ; Edgeworth collects all the uses of the adjective, though he offers no comment on the significance of Dido's specifically blonde locks. Edgeworth makes the implausible argument that the « business of the lock » is merely an excuse to allow the poet to bring the colorful Iris to the scene and thus relieve the unremitting tragedy. But Virgil allows no such comforts at the end of the fourth *Aeneid*. On hair color note also Y. SYED, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self : Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse*, Ann Arbor 2005, p. 99. Syed notes that Virgil does not reveal the hair color of Aeneas (indeed, that he is usually silent on the subject), but that he does highlight Dido's blonde hair color, in part to increase the visual impact of the scene.

15. On cooperation between Venus and Juno, note A. WLOSOK, *Die Göttin Venus in Vergils Aeneis*, Heidelberg 1967, pp. 102-103. For possible Hesiodic parallels for the struggle between the goddesses, see D. SIDER, « Vergil's *Aeneid* and Hesiod's *Theogony* » *Vergilius* 34, 1988, pp. 15-24.

16. F. KLINGNER sees a connection between the climactic Orpheus and Eurydice epyllion of the Aristaeus episode in *Georgics* 4, and Euripides' *Alcestis* (*Virgil : Bucolica, Georgica, Aeneis*, Zürich-Stuttgart 1967, pp. 350-363).

17. The geography of the Virgilian underworld at VI, 668 ff. is not presented as if Virgil were providing some neat description of a map. There is a road that branches off to Tartarus, and to Elysium ; the former is the home of Dis and Persephone ; the latter of Anchises and the destination of Aeneas. For speculation on just where Aeneas fixes the Bough, see W. JACKSON-KNIGHT, « Virgil's Elysium » in D. DUDLEY ed., *Virgil*, New York 1969, p. 168. See also L. CONSTANS, *op. cit.* n. 9, p. 217, and A. FELDHERR, « Putting Dido on the Map : Genre and Geography in Vergil's Underworld », *Arethusa* 32, 1999, pp. 85-122.

possession during the encounter with Dido's shade ; the pattern is therefore 1) the lock is cut, 2) the Bough is found, 3) Dido is encountered, 4) the Bough is deposited (VI, 637 *perfecto munere divae*)¹⁸. Proserpina did not oversee the cutting of the lock, and she is not present for the deposit of the Bough¹⁹. Juno facilitated the former, and Venus the latter.

Before the deposit of the goddess' token, Deiphobe, for her part, uses the Bough to cow the ferryman Charon into conveying Aeneas across the Styx (VI, 398-409). The Sibyl notes that Aeneas is not planning any tricks (such as those previous heroes have attempted, either to abduct Cerberus or Hades' wife) ; she notes :

... licet ingens ianitor antro
aeternum latrans exsanguis terreat umbras,
casta licet patruī servet Proserpina limen. (VI, 400-402)

The choices of proviso are governed by the mythological history of what had been attempted by would be travelers to Pluto's domain ; the language used to describe the god's bride is deliberately provocative²⁰. *Casta* refers harmlessly enough to the attitude one would expect from a proper Roman wife ; *patruī* rather ruins the chastely noble context by underscoring the incestuous nature of the union.

Proserpina, Deiphobe rather sarcastically seems to note, may continue to be the dutiful spouse of her uncle ; earlier, the Sibyl had emphasized (VI, 142 *pulchra*) the goddess' beautiful appearance – she wants the pretty Bough, in effect, perhaps in part because she is beautiful²¹. The Bough is a gift for the beautiful niece who is partner in an incestuous relationship with her uncle. There is always another Bough for a hero to pluck and present to the goddess ; presumably they are collected, perhaps merely for Proserpina's fancy – the girl who once plucked flowers²² in Sicily now collects the Golden Boughs plucked by heroes²³.

18. For connections between the Sibyl and Persephone, see V. MELLINGHOFF-BOURGERIE, *Les incertitudes de Virgile : Contributions épiciennes à la théologie de l'Énéide*, Bruxelles 1990, pp. 200-201.

19. For good overview of the whole sequence, including note of the « Stygian Jove-Juno » see J.-L. POMATHIOS, *Le pouvoir politique et sa représentation dans l'Énéide de Virgile*, Bruxelles 1987, pp. 292-3.

20. On Aeneas' tact in referring to such missions, see G. HIGHET, *The Speeches in Vergil's Aeneid*, Princeton 1972, pp. 279-80.

21. For the view that the Bough is « dead » because it belongs to the infernal queen, see A. BOYLE, *The Chaonian Dove : Studies in the Eclogues, Georgics, and Aeneid of Virgil*, Leiden 1986, p. 164. On the force of the important adjective *pulchra*, note P. HEUZÉ, *L'image du corps dans l'œuvre de Virgile*, Rome 1985, pp. 210-212, 247. Heuzé collects the instances of the adjective and provides comparison to Greek equivalents in epic verse, besides appearances in later Latin epic.

22. The presence of flowers is associated with sexual activity (see further West ad Hes., *Theogony* 194) ; in this case the imminent rape (which, however, will not result in offspring, as befits an infernal union).

23. The mockery (which Austin ad VI, 401 would extend to the Sibyl's description of Cerberus) is a subtle attack on the reality of the underworld. In the Roman political arena, Virgil's target is the question of the Augustan succession ; in the larger, philosophical realm, it is the question of the fate of the soul after death, with which Virgil would seem to more in agreement with Lucretius than those who would preach such fantasies as a three-headed dog and an immortal, wifely niece. For « deposit imagery » used of Persephone, see C. GRUZELIER, *Claudian : De Raptu Proserpinae*, Oxford 1993, pp. 115-116.

The Sibyl's sarcasm is of a piece with the seemingly strange language Aeneas uses with Dido's shade in the underworld at VI, 460 *invitus, regina tuo de litore cessi*, language odd for how it evokes Catullus (66, 39), of a shorn lock of Berenice's hair. The scene between Dido and Aeneas in the underworld links directly, then, to the preceding scene of the snipping of Dido's lock at the end of *Aeneid* IV (at least for those in Virgil's audience who know their Catullus and Callimachus). Dido's lock was cut by Juno's sending of Iris to hasten the queen's death ; Aeneas, for his part, like Berenice's lock, departed away from Dido unwillingly. The language – where Catullan burlesque is uncomfortably fitted into a deadly serious context, an emotional high point of the *Aeneid* – is deliberate and no barely conscious borrowing. The Catullan reminiscence injects a deliberate note of comedy into the proceeding, precisely to mock the whole matter of Aeneas' infatuation with Dido (and hers with him). For a Virgilian audience with active memories of Antony with Cleopatra, the mockery is particularly apt.

Before Aeneas begins the descent to Avernus, Virgil has him engage in a sacrifice ritual that has not received much attention for the seemingly ambiguous language used to describe the beneficiaries of the offerings :

*Aeneas matri Eumenidum magnaëque sorori
ense ferit sterilemque tibi, Proserpina, vaccam* (VI, 250-1)

The mother of the Eumenides is Night ; the identity of the “great sister” is a more difficult question. Tellus, the Earth, according to Servius, is the *magna soror*²⁴. At VII, 331, Allecto is the daughter of Night ; at XII, 845-7 and 860, the twin Dirae and Megaera join their furious sister as other named children of Nox. And Night in Virgil can sometimes stand for death²⁵. But who is most famously the *magna soror* in a Virgilian context ? Juno, most especially, it would seem ; she is the preeminent « sister » in the Olympian pantheon for the purposes of Virgil's narrative²⁶. In any case, the ambiguity is very much in Virgil's style ; the lack of specificity (cf. Ovid) forces contemplation on the identity of the goddess and the implications of that identity for the scene and poem. The triple mention of recipients of offerings for a katabasis evokes Hecate ; it is also conceivable the *magna soror* is Diana in her function as moon goddess, especially in the context of Virgil's underworld narrative²⁷. In Book VII, at the outset of the war in Latium, Allecto will serve as Juno's agent of destruction ; it is attractive to see Aeneas' sacrifices here as ultimately rather vain offerings : the daughter of Night, Allecto,

24. So also Austin *ad loc.*, who cites Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VII, 196 (offerings to Hecate and Tellus), where, however, the goddess is explicitly named, and C. MACKIE, *The Characterisation of Aeneas*, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 120-121.

25. *Aen.*, X, 746, and XII, 310 ; note also G. I, 468.

26. The identification of the « great sister » with Juno would also fit with the advice given to Aeneas to reverence Juno above all (III, 435-440). On this topos see J. DYSON, *King of the Wood : The Sacrificial Victor in Virgil's Aeneid*, Norman 2001, p. 42. For interesting attempts to connect the wrathful Juno with the Sibyl, see P. JOHNSTON, « Juno's Anger and the Sibyl at Cumae », *Vergilius* 44, 1998, pp. 13-23.

27. Virgil enjoys shifting identifications and not mutually exclusive associations of characters in his epic ; note G. DUCLOS, « Dido as Triformis Hecate », *Vergilius* 15, 1969, pp. 33-41.

will stir up war in Italy at Juno's behest. Proserpina is associated both with the lock of Dido's hair and the offering of the Golden Bough ; the Bough might seem a positive symbol of the hero's worth in being granted admittance to Elysium, but it is, in fact, connected by the poet with Aeneas' dalliance with Dido²⁸. Anchises' shade announces how concerned he was over affairs in Africa (VI, 694 *quam metui ne quid Libyae tibi regna nocerent !*) ; the Bough is token of entrance to the underworld, but is also inextricably linked to the hazards of the Trojan's encounter with Dido, which the poet's sarcasm underscores as an encounter whose enjoyment was not worth the risk of an empire. Aeneas, unlike Antony with Cleopatra, has successfully survived the Eastern siren, though only by divine intervention and not by the exercise of his free will.

Juno and Proserpina are intimately connected to the suicide of Dido ; the former, the all-powerful one (IV, 693 *omnipotens*), accomplished that which Proserpina could or would not do (at least in a timely fashion). Proserpina, the infernal Juno (VI, 138), is the intended recipient of the Bough ; Dis is the beneficiary of the snipped lock of hair that Proserpina is supposed to profer to her lord. Venus, for her part, lurks behind both the Dido narrative (especially in her collaborations with Juno)²⁹ and the discovery of the Golden Bough (VI, 190-200).

The « sterile cow » for Proserpina is an image borrowed from Homer (*Odyssey* X, 522, where the gift is to the Shades, not Persephone) ; the point of *sterilem* in Virgil, however, in a description of a sacrifice to the goddess is to underscore the apparent sterility of the goddess, who never bears Hades a child. In the context of the *Aeneid*, the problem of the Augustan succession is thus highlighted ; the death of Marcellus will deprive Augustus of a possible successor, just as Hades is childless despite his power over such a populous realm, and despite his nubile young wife³⁰.

Aeneas' triple sacrifice comes after the snipping of Dido's lock. It also follows the finding of the Bough. It does not, however, precede the offering of the Bough to Proserpina. In Virgil's presentation, the cutting of Dido's hair is delayed because she was not yet fated to die ; her suicide was, in a sense, a supreme exercise of free will, however emotionally overwrought the circumstances³¹. Proserpina had not yet taken the lock (the crucial adverb *nondum* at IV, 698 emphasizes this) ; she would take it only under the right circumstances. Aeneas, for his part, does not pluck the Bough as the Sibyl ordered, but rather seizes it with brute force (cf VI, 146 *carpe* and 210 *corripit*)³². Just as Juno, through Iris, hastened an act, so Aeneas (who will at poem's end inherit Juno's wrath) grabs the Bough roughly – and the Bough objects (VI,

28. On the important fact that the Bough ultimately seems necessary for entrance to Elysium, *not* the underworld *per se*, see D. NELIS, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*, Leeds 2001, p. 264.

29. IV, 90-128.

30. For the image of Proserpina with female companions – such as she had in Sicily when she was abducted, though now a deceased coterie – see G. ARRIGONI, *Camilla : Amazone e sacerdotessa di Diana*, Milano 1982, pp. 49-50.

31. In this depiction, Virgil may reflect the same terrifying freedom of spirit we see in Horace's presentation of Cleopatra at *Carm.*, I, 37, 29 *deliberata morte ferocior* – the queen is all the more fearful for her independent choice of exit.

32. The same verb *corripere* is used, significantly, to describe how Dido's shade departs from Aeneas (VI, 472 *tandem corripuit sese*), thus again with emphasis on the connection between Dido and the Bough. On the verb see E. NORDEN, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI*, Darmstadt 1957, pp. 294, 372, and 408.

211 *cunctantem*). Once Dido's hair is snipped, the soul is released ; it is as if the offering to Dis is simultaneous with the cutting. There is, in contrast, a delay between the snatching of the Bough and its offering, and in the time of that delay, there is the triple sacrifice, certainly to the mother of the Furies and to Proserpina. We know from the events of Book VII that the former sacrifice fails to restrain Night's daughter Allecto. As for Proserpina, she would not cut Dido's hair prematurely, and she does not prevent the encounter between Aeneas and the Carthaginian's shade, during which Aeneas says that, like the lock Iris snipped, he did not willingly leave Dido. Nor did the Bough willingly consent to Aeneas' rough treatment : the Golden Bough did not depart without hesitation. Only Dido acted in the exercise of her free will³³.

The Bough is the symbol of Aeneas' fitness to enter Elysium ; both Bough and Aeneas could be described as hesitant and unwilling to leave. The Bough is deposited just before Aeneas enters Elysium, and it is from that point that Bough and hero are separated ; Aeneas enters Elysium, there to learn truths he does not understand (*i.e.*, the future Roman history and, ultimately, the failure of the Augustan succession, as symbolized by the shade of Marcellus) – the Bough is token of admission, not comprehension.

At the beginning of the *Georgics*, the future deification of Octavian is announced (I, 24-42). The idea that he might rule over the underworld is dismissed :

*quidquid eris (nam te nec sperant³⁴ Tartara regem
nec tibi regnandi veniat tam dira cupido
quamvis Elysios miretur Graecia campos
nec repetita sequi curet Proserpina matrem) (I, 36-39)³⁵*

The phrase *dira cupido*, of rule over the infernal regions, is borrowed by Virgil at *Aeneid* VI, 721 *quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido ?*, where Aeneas wonders why anyone would want to live twice. Anchises is on the cusp of announcing the great system of reincarnation that enables the vision of Rome's future history ; Aeneas, for his part, does not understand why one would want to start over again and experience life's travails twice. The connection of the *Aeneid* passage with *G. I*, 38 *Elysios ... campos* is obvious ; in the proem to the *Georgics*, Virgil makes a not so subtle plea with Octavian regarding the usual Roman bugbear, monarchy (*regnandi*), but he casts it in the context of how rule over the underworld might well be attractive because

33. As does Turnus (and, for that matter, Dido's sometime « opposite » Camilla, not to mention Aeneas in the last lines of the poem) : if the point Virgil makes at the end of his *Odyssey* is his agreement with the substance of Lucretian philosophy, the end of the poem provides its own, greater surprise in light of the immediate concerns of the Augustan regime : the preeminence of Italy over Troy (cf. Caesar's flirtations with things Trojan and the celebration of the mythic origins of the *gens Iulia*). And, further, the failure of the principate to secure a succession is a microcosmic example of human mortality ; the inheritance of the wrath of Juno by Aeneas points to the terrible vision of continued mad strife as the one constant in an otherwise ephemeral world.

34. For the indicative, *contra* Servius and some manuscripts that prefer the subjunctive, see Mynors ad I, 39.

35. All quotes from the *Georgics* are taken from R. MYNORS, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, Oxford 1969 (corrected edition 1972).

of the Elysian Fields and, after all, the fact that Proserpina – who is never depicted with her mother in extant mythology after her abduction, seasonal release notwithstanding – seems to prefer to stay with Hades³⁶. Aeneas, too, would seem to favor remaining in the underworld, given his question for his father. The Bough had been needed for Elysium, the part of the underworld where one might well want to remain for all time – and, in Virgil's conception, the place where we find Anchises together with Orpheus.

But Proserpina also appears at the end of the *Georgics*³⁷. The scene is the celebrated Orpheus and Eurydice sequence, where, in language that was borrowed for the depiction of Aeneas' loss of Creusa³⁸, where Proserpina is given responsibility for having ordered Eurydice to follow *behind (pone)* Orpheus, who is not supposed to look at her :

*redditaque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras
pone sequens (namque hanc dederat Proserpina legem)* (IV, 486-487)³⁹

Orpheus, of course, suffers eventual anxiety over his wife's following behind him, and he looks back and, of course, loses her for a second time⁴⁰. In the underworld of the *Aeneid*, significantly we find Dido with Sychaeus (VI, 472-474), but no mention of Eurydice with Orpheus.

The Proserpina of *Georgics* I did not care about seeing her mother again ; the Proserpina of *Georgics* IV was willing for Eurydice to return from the dead, but on the condition that she accomplish, in a sense, that which Proserpina had been said not to care (*non curet*) to do : to follow another (*sequi*), having been sought again (*repetita*). Because of Orpheus, Eurydice ends up in exactly the position of Proserpina : forever in the underworld (though the goddess clearly cares less about her fate). On one level the story is a powerful commentary on the ultimate fate of mortals.⁴¹ On another, more subtle level we see in both the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid* the power Proserpina wields in her husband-uncle's domain : she gives the condition to Orpheus, just as she is responsible for snipping locks to consign souls to Orcus, and just as she receives the Bough that is the key of admission to Hades. She, along with Octavian, in a sense frames the poem.

36. Mynors ad I, 39 cites Luc., *Pharsalia* VI, 699, where Proserpina is depicted as hating both mother and heaven – an important passage for the view that Ceres' daughter enjoys her marriage.

37. As does Octavian ; see further Thomas ad *G.* I, 24-42. He is envisaged as an immortal at the end of the first book's proem, a mortal at IV, 559-662 – a significant shift of emphasis. But a mortal, admittedly, who affects to replace Jupiter (IV, 562, with Thomas' note). On Eurydice, see J. HEURGON, « Euridice » in *EV* II (1985), pp. 426-7. For Octavian as Jupiter, see L. MORGAN, *Patterns of Redemption in Virgil's Georgics*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 93-4.

38. Cf. *G.* IV, 487 and *A.* II, 725)

39. For the compressed language, see Thomas ad IV, 485, 487 : Virgil clearly expected the audience to know the details well. See also B. OTIS, *Virgil : A Study in Civilised Poetry*, Oxford 1964, p. 200, and C. NAPPA, *Reading After Actium : Vergil's Georgics, Octavian, and Rome*, Ann Arbor 2005, p. 214..

40. Good overview of Virgil's presentation of Orpheus in the *Georgics* can be found at J. BRISSON, *Virgile : Son temps et le nôtre*, Paris 1966, pp. 312-22.

41. Mynors ad IV, 490-3 cites Luc., *Orpheus* fr. 2 Morel (preserved by Servius ad *G.* IV, 492), where the shades rejoice at Eurydice's return, and anticipate Orpheus' own death.

The Sibyl had indicated that the Bough was needed as a preliminary offering to Proserpina for the hero to enter the underworld. In point of fact, it was *not* so required ; if anything, it was needed for admission to Elysium. The Sibyl's error – deliberate or not – fits well with the falsehood themes the poet develops strongly in *Aeneid* VI, culminating in the mystery of the Ivory Gate whereby false dreams are conveyed⁴². The Bough was not a necessary gift for Proserpina from a would-be hero in the underworld ; Dido's wound, too, was fatal, and there was no strict need for Proserpina – or anyone – to come and cut the lock of her hair as the price of admission to the underworld. She may have died before her time, but it was in accord with the supreme exercise of her free will, and the poet does not imagine she would have lived indefinitely in eternal death throes had Juno not taken pity on her. If Proserpina is powerful, part of the point may be that her power is over a non-existent realm (at least in light of Lucretian philosophy)⁴³.

But why did *Juno* take pity on Dido, besides her favor for the Carthaginians ? The end of *Aeneid* IV distantly presages the end of the epic, when Juno will win the concession that Rome will be Italian and not Trojan (XII, 833-42)⁴⁴. The epic's first third ends with sympathy for a Carthaginian ; the last third with the triumph of Italy, a triumph that is also the subject of the close of the poem's second third in Book VIII, though, significantly, the Trojan Aeneas is ignorant of the point. Juno intervenes at the end of Book XII and obtains a major concession for the Italians, a boon that is foreshadowed by her omnipotence at the end of Book IV in the matter of Carthage's queen. The powerful adjective *omnipotens* (IV, 693) distantly presages her power at the end of the epic⁴⁵.

Persephone, the goddess who in Euripides was not even mentioned as responsible for cutting the hair of the dying, is in Virgil's vision usurped in her task by Juno, the ultimately victorious goddess of the Italian triumph. The Bough that was falsely declared as a necessary gift for Persephone to gain entrance to the underworld is shown instead to be the token to gain admission to an Elysium where a false tale of reincarnation is offered to an Aeneas who is as unaware of the meaning of the underworld vision as of the images on his divinely crafted

42. For this reading of the Gates, where the poet expresses his allegiance to Lucretian eschatology after dismissing Homeric and Orphic/neo-Platonic, see L. FRATANTUONO, « A Brief Reflection on the Gates of Sleep », *Latomus* 66, 2007, pp. 628-635.

43. For the Bough, note Ser. ad *Aen.* VI, 136 : *licet de roc ramo hi qui de sacris Proserpinae scripsisse dicuntur quiddam esse mysticum adfirment ...*

44. And so the poem's first third ends with Juno sending Iris to help the Carthaginian Dido, just as the last third will end with Juno securing a victory of sorts for the Italians. The middle third ends with the Shield (and Aeneas' ignorance of the events it depicts) ; when Book IX begins, however, Juno will send Iris to Turnus, just as she does for Dido at the end of IV – a neat balance for a division of the epic into three parts, which might have influenced Ovid's division of his *Metamorphoses* into thirds, the first of which ends with Book V (where we find the story of Proserpina's abduction).

45. And, significantly, she usurps the apparent prerogative of the goddess for whom the token of admission to Elysium must be presented.

shield. And the Sibyl – who was not entirely correct about the need for the Bough – feels secure in being sarcastic about how the chaste daughter of Zeus warms the bed of her uncle in a very un-Roman sort of marriage.

This ambivalent depiction of hell's queen accords with the framing vision of the *Georgics*, where Octavian is *not* expected to rule in the underworld (I, *nam te nec sperant Tartara regem*), despite the fact that Greece marvels at Elysium and that Proserpina wishes to stay there, and where Proserpina gives the order that will ultimately lead to Eurydice's second death⁴⁶. Aeneas wondered why anyone would want to live again, with the implicit wish that once dead, he might remain in Elysium for all time, just as he wanted to stay with Dido in Carthage indefinitely. There may be a connection, too, between the name of Eurydice and its connotations of the broad expanse of justice and law and Octavian's giving laws widely through the world (IV, *per populos dat iura*)⁴⁷. Aeneas, like Orpheus, told his wife to walk behind him ; the former made his own decision, though he did not realize he was telling Creusa to do that which Proserpina had already ordered of Orpheus and Eurydice in the *Georgics*, with sad outcome⁴⁸.

There is another sort of mention of Proserpina in the *Aeneid*, an allusion both subtle and powerful. Before the loss of Creusa, Aeneas arranges for the Trojan exiles to gather outside the city walls, near an old temple of “the deserted Ceres” :

... *templumque vetustum*
desertae Cereris (II, 713-714)

When Aeneas arrives at the shrine and realizes that Creusa is gone, he describes the edifice in slightly, yet significantly different language :

... *tumulum antiquae Cereris* (II, 742)

Vetustum has become *antiquae* ; the *templum* is now, appropriately enough, a *tumulus*. The key adjective *desertae* is gone altogether ; it is almost as if Creusa were a sacrifice of sorts to the “abandoned” Ceres⁴⁹. And, of course, Creusa has mysteriously abandoned Aeneas, the

46. There is a strong connection between the *lex* given by Proserpina to Orpheus and Eurydice and the lore of Persephone's being condemned to the underworld for having consumed food there.

47. See further Ful., *Myth.* 3,10 *Eurydice ... profunda diiudicatio*.

48. The fact that Creusa is lost despite Aeneas' not looking back or breaking any sort of divine edict is telling : just as the Bough was not needed to enter the underworld, and just as the cutting of a lock is not needed to die, so no one can be saved from death – Eurydice, Creusa, or anyone. Proserpina gave a *lex* that was broken, but perhaps powerless under the best of circumstances. There is subtle Virgilian commentary on the Persephonic *lex* and Octavian's would-be Jovian *iura* at the end of the *Georgics*. Proserpina's *lex* is meaningless if no one can be saved from death ; the point of the Persephone abduction myth becomes clear : all die, and there is no respite (and so Persephone is never seen except in the underworld). We meet neither Eurydice nor Creusa in *Aeneid* VI.

49. For the scholiastic (and other) views, see Horsfall *ad loc.* ; all associations are present in *desertae* (Creusa, Troy, daughter), but the primary association for Ceres' desertion is the loss of Proserpina.

father of the exile band. The careful allusion to the abandoned goddess neatly describes the action of Creusa's disappearance, and connects her with the Eurydice of the *Georgics*, who was lost according to the unyielding rubrics of Persephone's law : Aeneas as Orpheus⁵⁰.

In the *Georgics*, Proserpina appears near the beginning and end of the work as a frame that serves ultimately to caution Octavian (and the general reader) about belief in the traditional underworld, or, for that matter, Orphic regeneration and the chance for a second mortal life. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil follows the philosophical path he started in his previous work, by now presenting the underworld goddess in the complex, interconnected narratives of the death of Dido and the entry to Elysium that mark emotional high points in the drama of the Odyssean *Aeneid*. Aeneas' three sacrifices to the mother of the Furies, Juno, and Proserpina, all fail : the first in the imminent drama of Allecto's fury, the second in the suppression of Trojan culture that Juno secures as the reward for her rage, the third and last because, after all, there is no Proserpina, no Elysium, and no guarantee of a worthy Augustan succession.

50. For Creusa and Eurydice, see M. RIVOLTELLA, *Le forme del morire : La gestualità nelle scene di morte dell'Eneide*, Milano 2005, pp. 70-72. In the matter of Virgil's association of Aeneas with Orpheus, the Trojan hero is equated not with the Orpheus of *Aeneid* VI, the bard of Elysium, but rather with the forlorn husband of the *Georgics*.