

Bookends to Wandering: Claude Lorrain's Coast View with Aeneas Hunting and Coast View  
with Aeneas and the Cumaean Sibyl as the Frame of Aeneid I-VI

In the early 1670's, Claude Lorrain painted two landscapes, of which we now have only his detailed and artful drawings, with scenes from the Aeneid. He painted them for Paolo Francesco Falconieri, a Florentine prince living in Rome. They depict the scene in book I where Aeneas lands in Carthage and hunts deer to feed his men, and the beginning of book VI where he meets the Sibyl at Cumae. In the first drawing, on the lower left, he has written the exact passage ("libro di Virgilio / folio 10"-Aeneid I.158-93) that he had in mind. The second drawing has no reference. (Provenance from Rand, 185.)

The two scenes are, in fact, well fit to be set together. They are from the first and last books of what is now the more popular half of the Aeneid. They furthermore show the opposition between Rome and Carthage that is both the chief drama of the first half and an important feature of Roman history. Claude has represented this by putting the viewpoints of the two pictures facing each other, which we can ascertain from the geography. Thus we have a representation of "urbs antiqua <fuit> (Tyrii tenuere coloni) / Karthago, Italiam contra Tiberinaque longe / Ostia" 'the ancient city, (Tyrian settlers held it.) Carthage facing against Italy and the mouths of the Tiber from afar.' (*Aeneid* I.12-4) Carthage is 'contra Italiam,' both against it and facing it. In the first picture, we are looking toward the future, in Italy, while Aeneas looks toward Carthage, his distraction. In the second picture, we are looking back at Carthage and Troy, as Aeneas will do for the first two parts of book VI, while the Sibyl shows him forward into Italy, which he will come to know as his legacy in the latter part of the book.

However, there is an extra-geographical island in the second drawing, and for that matter, the sunset itself is, contrary to nature, in the South. As the explication of the drawings

progresses, it becomes clear that while the first drawing rigorously and literally corresponds to the source material, the second drawing is rather a parallel poetic rendering of what it depicts from book VI. In this we learn why Claude did not write a reference for the drawing: He has included elements from both the finding of the golden bough and the entrance to the underworld, such that it cannot truly be either. It seems that Claude has grasped what many modern scholars have discovered in book VI, namely that it does not strictly correspond to itself.

For instance, (Here I draw from Otis.) the portrayal of Hades switches between the traditional mythological conception and the Platonic one described in book X of the Republic; the goal in life switches between Plato's philosophical ideal and Cicero's conflicting political one; and finally, Aeneas, when presented with two gates--of false and true dreams, respectively, he exits through the former. Otis resolves this by saying that Aeneas exits the katabasis through the gate of false dreams because the katabasis is a dream rather than reality, and thus the other problems exist because it is the impression rather than the reality that matters. One might add that in a dream inconsistencies may be not only tolerated but expected. This explains the unreliability of the topographical correspondence, the uncertainty of the exact point in the text, and the relative general lack of precision in the second drawing.

On the whole, the first drawing shows the hunt, with all its excitement and precision. It does this through careful depiction of the characters in action, through lines and motions that lead off the page, and in its own scrupulous accuracy. It shows the excitement of a beginning, though it is the middle of the hunt. The second drawing shows the deathly journey that is not an end. The characters and water are relaxed, and the lines lead to the center. The setting sun represents both the coming of darkness underground and the sleep of the dream of katabasis, but the confusion of elements reminds us that it is not a true end, and the Sibyl points

us forward into Italy.





## Bibliography

Otis, Brooks. "Three Problems of *Aeneid* 6." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* Vol. 90 (1959): pp. 165-179.

Rand, Richard. *Claude Lorrain: The Painter as Draftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.