

## Anchises' *turbida...imago* and Aeneas' appeal to Dido

At Aeneid 4.351-53, both Dido and the poem's audience learn for the first time that Anchises' ghost has been visiting Aeneas every night in his dreams: *me patris Anchisae, quotiens umentibus umbris / nox operit terras, quotiens astra ignea surgunt / admonet in somnis et turbida terret imago*. From Servius on, commentators have failed to give adequate weight to the impact of this statement. In this paper, I shall argue that Vergil's audience would have found this statement surprising, for this previously unmentioned detail suddenly disturbs what seemed to have been Aeneas' carefree time at Carthage; more importantly, it seems calculated to affect Dido, but this did not occur as Aeneas might have intended.

After Mercury's departure, Vergil depicts Aeneas as questioning himself: *heu quid agat? quo nunc reginam ambire furem / audeat adfatu? quae prima exordia sumat?* (4.283-84). Aeneas knows there is no easy way to inform Dido of his imminent departure. Vergil portrays Aeneas as carefully considering the contents of his forthcoming speech, alluding to Odysseus to emphasize this point: *atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc dividit illuc / in partisque rapit varias perque omnia versat* (4.285-6). Before Aeneas can address her, however, Dido (with Rumor's assistance) anticipates his plans and confronts him. Responding to her pleas, Aeneas first directly addresses issues that she raises (their relationship, the destruction of Troy – which is combined with fate – and their love) and then adds the significant matters of duty, destiny, and his son Ascanius – all of which echo the previous words of Mercury (and Jupiter). The only point Aeneas raises that has no direct parallel to either Dido's or Mercury's speeches is his reference to his father's ghost. By mentioning Anchises, Aeneas, knowing that she had experienced

something similar when Sychaeus' spirit visited her in a dream, attempts to inspire sympathy. By revealing his troubled and troubling dreams, he establishes a link with Dido's prior experience and thus attempts to elicit, through the commonality of their experiences, her understanding and compassion.

That he does not receive her compassion and understanding is not surprising, however, for the poet makes it clear from Dido's initial speech that her concerns lie elsewhere, specifically on her understanding of their relationship, the dangers of her present political circumstances, her lost sense of honor, and her bereavement. In addition to having lost Sychaeus, Dido now realizes that she is losing both Aeneas and the hope of offspring. Stirred by these emotional issues as well by as divine forces, Dido does not acknowledge Aeneas' mention of Anchises' ghost when responding to him; nevertheless, when she later appeals to her sister, she reacts as if it were an accusation (*nec patris Anchisae cineres manisve revelli*, 427). In her distressed state, the previously capable, fair, and level-headed queen seems to have interpreted Aeneas' revelation and appeal for sympathy as an attack; furthermore, she does not recognize that Aeneas, too, is emotionally troubled, as his description of Anchises' *imago... turbida* conveys.

Of the seventeen occurrences of the adjective *turbidus* in Vergil's corpus, fifteen are in the Aeneid. The two in the Georgics refer to rivers, the Hermus (2.137) and the Hister (3.350), in phrases that suggest *turbidus* to mean 'churning.' In the Aeneid, Vergil deploys *turbidus* seven times to natural phenomena (*nubila, pulvis, gurgēs, imber, loca infera*), conveying that these entities not only move inwardly in an unpredictable and violent manner but that their inner movement emanates outward to influence the environment and people around them. His other principal usage of *turbidus* (another seven occurrences) involves warriors (Turnus, Mezentius,

Tarchon, Arruns) and similarly portrays not only their inner emotional turbulence but its resultant outward effects. In short, the poet's deployment of *turbidus* conveys not only agitated inner (e)motion, but the outward results of that agitation. Thus, when Aeneas describes Anchises' *imago* as *turbida*, he highlights its effects on his own emotional state. Not only does the ghost whirl like a *gurgēs* or *nubila*, but its movement instills emotional distress in Aeneas. In sum, the ghost's turbulence, both physical and emotional (or outer and inner), affects Aeneas greatly. Commentators who suggest that *turbidus* means merely 'troubled' or 'agitated' (Austin, Page, Pease, Conington ad loc.), as if it equalled *turbatus*, note only the internal aspect; they fail to account for the contagious nature of that turbulence and do not adequately convey Aeneas' own emotional state and subsequent request for compassion.

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