THE UNDER WORLD IN COMUS AND VIRGIL

By

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Introduction to the Study

Man has always felt a need to believe in some form of immortality. In different times and cultures this need has found expression in many varied patterns of belief, and these are described by the great writers of each age. This study will investigate the underworld as described in the Iliad and the Odyssey of Homer, and in the Aeneid of Virgil. These poets wrote epics which have stood as classics, and a close study of these works should give some indication of the ideas of their authors about death and immortality, which can be related in many ways to each other and to present beliefs.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the underworld only as it is shown in the three epics mentioned above, using the translations of Rolfe and Humphries. Most of the research is based upon the original sources, using secondary source material primarily for comment and enrichment. The controversial issue of whether Homer existed, or when he existed, or what he wrote is not considered in this paper. For this study it is necessary to accept these books as describing a past age which the author himself knew only from earlier poets and from tradition, and to accept him as the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey. These books then deal with a
period of history notable both for its simplicity and its cruelty - a time when old civilizations were being invaded and the national desire was to roam and conquer. The society Homer described can in part be dated - perhaps to the destruction of the sixth Troy, about 1194 B.C. - and in part reached back to the dimmest antiquity.2 The attitudes of this age toward the underworld and the soul had changed from the attitudes of earlier civilizations, such as ancient Egypt. The Egyptians associated a great deal of magic with burial customs, gave some substance to the soul, and believed the body important enough to preserve.3 Homer took a great step by abolishing almost all magical practices, rites, and formulas from his books.4 His heroes believed in an afterlife controlled by ordered laws of nature and the gods. There was not the need for the degree of fear of the supernatural which the Egyptians had possessed as the world of the Greeks was better known and understood and was thus a less threatening universe. The underworld's existence was definitely believed by the Greeks, but they could only speculate individually upon its specific description, location, and inhabitants.5 Homer could express only one man's conception of this belief, and he expressed it as a poet dealing with myth, with no attempt to establish a dogma for his age.

Virgil probably wrote the Aeneid for two purposes: (1) to commemorate Rome and Augustus, and (2) to "write an
imitative epic reproducing some image of the manners and life of the heroic age. At the time he wrote, 7 Rome was growing proud of its history and the Aeneid set forth a noble heritage and a lineage relating the Romans to the gods, and showing Augustus, in the person of Aeneas, as embodying all the desirable heroic traits. The epic clearly imitates the Odyssey in Books 1 to 6, and the Iliad in Books 7 to 12. Book 6, "The Lower World," is much more detailed than Homer's account, and seems to be copied mainly from Hesiod and Lucretius. Although, unlike Homer, Virgil "did not believe in the myths..., he brought mythological personages to life as no one had done since the Greek tragedians." Despite the interest aroused by the question of Virgil's belief in his writings, for the purpose of this paper we will accept the Aeneid at face value in our comparison of the two poets.
The Underworld as a Place

The underworld in Homer is considered a definite place, rather than only a state of mind, occupying a geographical location and having some brief physical description. This place is referred to as Hades, Tartarus, or Erebus.

Tartarus and Erebus are sometimes two divisions of the underworld, Tartarus the deeper of the two, the prison of the Sons of earth; Erebus where the dead pass as soon as they die. Often, however, there is no distinction between the two, and either is used, especially Tartarus as the name for the entire lower region.11

The only clear reference to this division is given by Zeus when he refers to Tartarus as being "as far below Hades as heaven is above the earth."12

The Greeks at times indicated an actual, rather than a purely mythical, site of the underworld. It seems to be located in the West, as Athena directs Odysseus "westward toward the misty gloom."13 The cave of Scylla also faces "west toward Erebus."14 To reach the land of the dead, Circe directs Odysseus to cross the ocean where he "will see a low shore, and the groves of the幽冥."15 In other places, Homer refers to Hades as being definitely a lower world. For example, Theoclymenus refers to the direction as "down to Hades."16
Nestor says the souls of dead heroes have descended "down into the house of death." Trior would rather "go down to the gates of death before he saw Troy destroyed," and Andromache speaks of Hector as going "to the house of Hades deep down under the earth." The underworld is clearly envisioned as being below the earth in such references as "under the black earth" and "in the caverns under the earth." Zeus speaks to the assembled gods, describing Hades as being "a bottomless pit under the earth," and during the battle of the gods before Troy there was fear that "Poseidon Earthshaker should break the earth above...and lay open to every eye those...abodes." There seems to be a definite contradiction in Homer regarding the question of whether Odysseus actually visited Hades. Odysseus, at Circe's direction, simply sails over the ocean, lands beside a low shore, and there sacrifices to the dead and speaks with them. Although this is "the world's boundary," it is not below the earth. Odysseus never does descend. The souls of the dead "come up in a crowd from Erebos." Later in the story Odysseus saw and conversed easily with various other inhabitants of Hades who did not come up to him but kept on about their business. There is a good deal of ambiguity here concerning the position of Odysseus. Homer does not
mention Odysseus' moving from the pit of sacrifice, but
Odysseus at times seems to be down in the underworld to
such an extent that he can speak with Hercules and observe
Minos. Perhaps Odysseus is on a threshold between the
world of the living and the underworld, but if so Homer
seems to have given him the mysterious power to view the
whole underworld from his position.

Homer is also vague in his description of Hades.
It is a shadowy place "void of light and breeze, as
Zeus illustrates when he says Tartarus is "without the
rays of Helios... or the breezes of the air." Anticleia
speaks of "the cloudy gloom." Hades was described as
"gruesome (and) darksome," and Theoclymenos spoke of
going "...down to Erebus and the dark." This darkness
in Hades is emphasized when Helios threatens to "go down
to Hades and show (his) light among the dead." In fact,
when Odysseus came to the "world's boundary," the land of
the Cimmerian people was always in night. In spite of
this perpetual gloom, Odysseus had no trouble seeing the
souls of Teiresias and the others.

Homer gives almost no physical description of the
underworld. He tells of Orion "driving...beasts...over
the meadow of asphodel," and mentions the meadow of
asphodel again in connection with the souls of the dead
suitors. Penelopeia talks with Odysseus about the two
gates of sleep in Hades: one of horn which lets out true dreams, and one of ivory which releases false dreams. Also, from his vantage point Odysseus looks into Erebus and sees Minos judging the dead "in the house of Hades with its wide portals." This suggestion that there might be such a building in the underworld strengthens the sense of Hades as a physical place rather than a dim state of half-existence.

The Odyssey indicates in one passage a second division of the underworld, evidently different from the meadow of asphodel which was inhabited by the majority of the spirits. Proteus told Menelaos he would be taken after death to the Elysian plain at the end of the earth...

That is the place where life is easiest for mankind: no snow, no stormy wind or rain, but Zephyros with his gentle whistling breeze ever comes up from the Ocean to refresh mankind.

Other than to give specific examples of punishments suffered by a few individuals in a few specific settings, there is no description of the underworld in Homer beyond that given above.

To reach the land of the dead Odysseus is told to sail to the ends of the earth, across Oceanos, which is the world's boundary. Sephaistos recognized this, for in his design on the shield he made for Achilles he "placed the mighty river of Oceanos at the extreme edge."
Besides Oceanos, there are four other rivers connected with Homer's underworld. Iryphlegethon, the river of fire, and Cocytos, the river of lamentation, flow into Acheron, the river of pain. Cocytos is a branch of the Styx, by which the gods take oath. The Styx is of great importance in Greek mythology. An oath upon the styx seems to be the one which no god could break without terrible punishment, as Calypso shows when she promises Odysseus safety by "the pairing force of Styx - that is the most awful oath of the blessed gods...." These rivers were supposed to be the boundaries of Hades. Anticleia told Odysseus that there were "great rivers between" the lands of the living and Hades. Also, Patroclus' spirit told Achilles that "the souls of the dead keep me far away, nor do they suffer me to join them on the other side of the river" because he had not been buried. To strengthen the suggestion that Odysseus never really visited the underworld, he also never crossed these rivers. He crossed only Oceanos before he came to the meeting place with Teiresias. But there remains one contradiction involving the rivers. If they were really the boundaries of Hades, all spirits would have to cross them to be admitted to the underworld. When Hermes leads the souls of the dead suitors to Hades, they cross only Oceanos, with no reference to other rivers.
This contradiction concerning the rivers and the lack of
detail about Hades simply serves to reinforce the idea
that the Greeks had no definite conception of the under-
world, and that Homer was writing from old myths, and was
probably more interested in telling a good story than in
setting up a pattern of religious beliefs.

The underworld of Virgil's *Aeneid* is described
clearly and in great detail. In order to discuss Virgil's
underworld with a certain degree of understanding, it is
necessary first to describe Aeneas' visit to the lower
world at some length. The following is a summary of Book
VI of the *Aeneid*, "The Lower World," as it pertains to
physical description and location and the general types
of inhabitants.45

Aeneas is told by his father, Anchises, to visit
him in the lower world, and to go to the Sibyl at Cumae
to obtain directions. The Sibyl warns him of the danger
of the trip and of the difficulty of the return. She
describes Ceytus, which surrounds the central woods of
Hades. Before descending, Aeneas must find a golden
bough in the grove of Avernus, which is sacred to Per-
sephone. Aeneas follows two doves, the birds of his mother
Venus, and they lead him to the golden bough of Persephone.
Near the bough there is a dark cavern which is the entrance
to Avernus. Aeneas plucks the branch and returns to the
Sibyl. The next morning Aeneas and the Sibyl return to the cavern, offer sacrifices to the gods of the underworld, and follow the dark and shadowy path down. They pass the first threshold where live Grief, Care, Disease, the Furies, Sleep, Death, various monsters, and ills which plague man. Aeneas tries to attack these, but the Sibyl tells him they are just phantoms. They then turn off the road to Acheron, the River of Hell, and Cocytos. Here old Charon is ferrying the souls of the dead across Styx, the river by which the gods take oath, and which circles Hades nine times. He will take only buried souls across, and those who are unburied must stand a hundred years before they are allowed passage. Aeneas and the Sibyl cross the silent forest to the river, are challenged by Charon, explain their purpose, and upon showing the golden branch are taken to the gray farther shore. Here they pass the cavern of Cerberus, the Hound of Hell, with three throats and heads. The Sibyl quiets him with a drug. Beyond the river and the cavern are infants who died young, and the spirits of men convicted of crimes falsely. Minos re-judges these and a silent jury pronounces sentence. Here also are the suicides, who would return to life gladly if they could. Next Aeneas and the Sibyl come to the Fields of Mourning where live those who died of
hopeless love. The last field is occupied by warriors. These are rather unsubstantial. Some of them speak to Aeneas and some flee from him.

The Sibyl now hurries Aeneas along as they come to the cross-roads. To the right is Elysium. To the left is Tartarus and punishment for the wicked. There are tall, strong gates guarded by a Fury who restricts entrance. Phlegoteon, the river of fire, also runs before these gates. Behind the gate Aeneas hears sobbing and the sounds of cruel punishment. The Sibyl has never been beyond the gate, and explains that no pure soul can enter. She explains that Rhadamanthus judges all guilty of evil there. A Fury punishes all found guilty. Tartarus was behind the gate, as deep as twice the distance between earth and Olympus. The Sibyl lists many crimes for which men are put behind these gates and tells a few of the punishments they suffer. Beyond this cross-road are portals and an archway. Here Aeneas places his golden branch, and the goddess hersephone is satisfied.

The two travelers now come to Elysium, the home of the Blessed. Here live heroes, poets, the seekers after truth, and all who serve mankind. This land is green and bright, with groves and meadows and streams. Here the souls of the dead do whatever they wish, whatever they had enjoyed while living. There Aeneas and the Sibyl
find Anchises, and he shows them Lethe, the river of
forgetfulness. He explains the nature of Elysium and
points out to them the souls of the future heroes of
Rome.

Near Elysium there are twin gates of sleep. One
is of horn, which releases true shades. One is of ivory,
which releases false dreams to the world. The travelers
leave Anchises by the gate of ivory and Aeneas goes up
to the land of the living and joins his comrades.

From the preceding description, it can be seen
that there are several likenesses between the underworlds
of Homer and of Virgil. In the Aeneid, Virgil talks
about an earthquake which would "bring to light the
Kingdoms of the world below." In the Iliad, the same
fear is expressed in regard to the battle of the gods
before Troy. In both underworlds, the gods take oath by
Styx. Both authors describe a separate place for the
Blessed, although Homer mentions this only once and Virgil
describes it at great length. Homer and Virgil both
describe the underworld as being dark and gloomy, with
the exception of the fields of the Blessed. The river
or rivers of Hades are described by both authors, although
there still remain many questions concerning this in
Homer, and Virgil is much more lucid in his explanation
of the rivers, their locations, and their purposes.

Homer leaves the site of the entrance to Hades in doubt. It is somewhere to the west, across Ocean, over the rim of the world. In Virgil Hades is definitely below the earth, and there are definite entrances. One is in Cumae in the grove of Avernus where Aeneas and the Sibyl descended. In Italy there is a cavern in the valley of Ampsanctus which is a "breathing hole for terrible Dis, and a gorge, where Acheron" flows.77 Allecto, a Fury, used this cavern as a path to Hades.

The underworld in Homer was in all aspects vague and shadowy. This may have come from his lack of desire to describe a specific place which could be translated into dogma. This lack of description may also have been a result of the very nature of the myths with which he dealt. Virgil, on the other hand, described his underworld in careful detail, perhaps in order to carry out his political allegory. The differences in purposes explain the differences in depth of the physical descriptions of the two underworlds.
Inhabitants of the Underworld

In both Greek and Roman mythology, the ruler of the underworld was Hades, often called Pluto or Dis. Hades, Zeus, and Poseidon were the sons of Cronus and Rea. They cast lots for shares of the universe, and Zeus drew the heavens, Poseidon the sea, and Hades the underworld. Hades abducted Persephone, the daughter of Ceres, goddess of grain. Ceres begged Zeus for Persephone's return, and at Zeus' request Hades returned her to her mother for part of each year. Hades and Persephone together ruled the underworld, and were terribly feared by the living. Nestor said that "...only Hades is pitiless and unyielding, and that is why men hate him most of all the gods." Even the gods did not welcome Hades and did not look forward to his unfrequent visits to Olympus.

Although Hades and Persephone were the principal gods and rulers of the underworld, there were many other divine or semi-divine inhabitants. In Tartarus lived the Titans, the older gods who had been supreme until Zeus, the son of the Titan Cronus, dethroned his father and seized control. Zeus then imprisoned the Titans in Tartarus. Oceanus, the river which encircled the earth, was also a Titan, but he simply took a lower place than
he had had before the Olympians became supreme. Hera, in the Iliad, spoke of the "gods under Tartaros who are called the Titans."\(^{50}\)

Some of the other extra-human inhabitants of Hades were Sleep and his brother Death, dreams, and many evils which plague mankind.\(^{51}\) Hecate also dwelt below. She was sometimes called Queen of Hell and sometimes referred to simply as a "power in heaven, a power in hell."\(^{52}\)

Hermes, the gods' messenger, evidently had the position of summoner to the lower world, although he lived in Olympus with the other gods. He led the souls of the dead suitors to Hades\(^{53}\) and carried "the wand which summons pale ghosts from Hell, or sends them there."\(^{54}\)

The final divine inhabitants of Hades were the Furies, or Erinyes, the daughters of Night. They were described in the Aeneid as:

Twin fiends, or triple, sisters named the Furies, Daughters of Night, with snaky coils, and pinions Like those of wind. They are attendant spirits Before the throne of Jove and what the Fears Of sickly mortals, when the king of heaven Contrives disease or dreadful death, or frightens The guilty towns in war.\(^{55}\)

There is a contradiction involved in the dwelling place of the Furies, as the above quotation places them near Zeus, evidently in Olympus, but in other references they are definitely said to inhabit Hades. In the Aeneid,
Hades is referred to as the "Grim Sisters' home."\textsuperscript{56} Also in the \textit{Aenoid}, Tisiphone, a Fury, guarded the gate to the place of punishment in Hades beyond which Aeneas and the Sibyl could not go.\textsuperscript{57} Allecto, a second Fury, was sent by Hera to start war between the Trojans and Latium, and Allecto was a "dweller in Hell's dark shadows."\textsuperscript{58} The third Fury was Megaera, but neither Homer nor Virgil assigned her a specific task.

The Furies were usually considered the just punishers of evil.\textsuperscript{59} The fulfillment of curses was also "the special duty of the Erinyes."\textsuperscript{60} It is not clear if the Furies were the same three as the Fates, or Avengers. If so, the Fates were three goddesses who spun the thread of life for each mortal and cut it off when the span of his life was fulfilled. They were all-powerful, and even Zeus could not change their decree.\textsuperscript{61} They are often referred to in Homer and Virgil as checking a life or tying off the thread of life.\textsuperscript{62}

The dead in both Homer and Virgil were "empty shells"\textsuperscript{63} with no "strength or power left in (them)."\textsuperscript{64} When Odysseus tried to embrace his mother and could not, she told him, "as soon as the spirit leaves the white boned, the sinews no longer old flesh and bones together - the blazing fire consumes them all; but the soul flits away fluttering like a dream."\textsuperscript{65} Aeneas also tried to
embrace his father but "the image fled like the breath of the wind or a dream on wings." Achilles described Patroclus' spirit as a "soul and a phantom but no real life in it at all." These spirits were seemingly derived of sensation. Teiresias "alone had sense, and others are flitting shadows." These spirits considered blood refreshing as wine is to a man. When Odysseus allowed the spirits to drink the blood of sacrifice, they conversed with him and told "what is true." Their lives seemed to be but a shadowy reflection of life on earth. In the main they pursued their old occupations, but they did not enjoy this life. They were:

merely the perpetuation of the shadows of departed humanity, 'strengthless shades' who live on the gloomy plains of asphodel, feeding upon dear memories, and incapable of keen emotions or any real mental or physical progress or action. Only a few great sinners, like Tantalus, doomed to eternal torture, or favored beings like Helenus, predestined to the 'Blessed Isles', are ordained to any real immortality. This attitude of complete unhappiness in the underworld was apparent in both Homer and Virgil. In the Iliad, Lycaon was "much loth to do" to Hades. Turnus' spirit "went with a moan indignant to the shadows." Perhaps the most comprehensive statement is made by Achilles' ghost when he tells Odysseus he "would rather be plowman to a yeoman farmer on a small holding than lord paramount in the kingdom of the dead."
The souls in Hades occasionally, but not always, may have some influence upon the living. Elpenor says he can "draw God's vengeance upon" Odysseus if he isn't buried promptly. But we cannot tell if Elpenor is going to do this himself or if Odysseus would be punished by Zeus for neglecting his duty to his friend. In Homer, the dead do not seem able to know present events on earth as they must learn news about their friends and loved ones from visitors to Hades or from the newly dead. Yet Achilles speaks to himself in regard to Patroclus finding out in Hades that Hector's body has been returned. This phrase may have been simply an expression used by Achilles to show his determination not to return the body.

In the Aeneid, there seems to be slightly more connection between the living and the dead. In the Iliad, Patroclus' ghost could return and speak with Achilles only before it was properly buried. Patroclus' spirit says, "Never again shall I come back from Hades when once you have given me my portion of fire." But in the Aeneid, the spirit of Anchises returns to speak with Aeneas after Anchises has been buried for some time. Also, in the Aeneid, Turnus calls upon the "shadows" in Hades to protect him, an act which would have been pointless if the inhabitants of the underworld were totally incapable of affecting the world of the living. The final connection
between the worlds of the living and the dead is shown by Aeneas as he describes the future of Rome, and by the very fact that the spirits in Elysium were planning to return to earth as living men again.

One of the most complicated areas associated with the mythology of the underworld is the matter of burial customs. Although these are without question interrelated with any discussion of the underworld, for the purposes of this paper the investigation can include only death and burial customs as they definitely affect the underworld in Homer and Virgil.

In both Homer and Virgil, the dead must be buried or cremated before they can enter Hades. Patroclus told Achilles:

'Bury me without delay, that I may pass the gates of Hades. Those phantoms hold me off, the souls of those whose work is done; they will not suffer me to join them beyond the river, but I wander aimlessly about the broad gates of the house of Hades'.

In the Aeneid, Charon will not ferry the unburied for one hundred years. It seems that complete separation of soul and body is necessary so the soul can join the dead in Hades, and this separation can only be obtained by destruction or burial of the body. The "dead were capable of different degrees of happiness, and...this depended in great measure upon the treatment accorded their lifeless corpses." This dependence of the soul
upon treatment accorded the dead body holds true in Virgil too, as is shown by Palinurus' great happiness at being promised remembrance upon earth. In Homer, actual cremation was necessary to satisfy the soul. In Virgil, there is little difference shown between cremation and simple burial. In most cases burial seemed to refer to an actual placing of the body in the earth and erecting a monument above it.

From the above discussion concerning the masses of the dead, this study can move into a consideration of some individual formerly-human inhabitants of Hades. Two of these specific persons were Minos and Rhadamanthys, who were sons of Zeus and judges in Hades. Minos was judge in the *Odyssey*. He held "a golden rod and (gave) sentence upon the dead." He was "grim-hearted," a former King of Crete and supposedly cruel and inflexible.

In the *Aeneid*, Minos judged those "whom false sentence brought to death." Rhadamanthys punished the guilty and heard confession in the *Aeneid*, although he was mentioned in Homer as being only a golden-haired inhabitant of the Elysian Plain. He acquired his position because he had been a just judge on earth. The three epics do not elaborate beyond this point upon the judges of Hades, nor do they mention the legendary third brother, Aeacus.
The three whose punishments in Hades were most clearly defined by both Homer and Virgil were Sisyphos, Tantalos, and Tityos. Sisyphos incessantly pushed a huge stone up a hill, and just as it reached the crest it rolled back. For eternity he had to push that stone. No reason was given for his punishment in Homer or Virgil, but Hamilton said he was punished for revealing a secret of Zeus. Tantalos stood in a lake in Hades and was forever hungry and thirsty. There were fruit trees over his head, but as soon as he reached for the fruit the wind blew the branches up. The lake water came to his chin, but as soon as he tried to drink, the water receded. As with Sisyphos, there was given no reason for his punishment by Homer or Virgil. Hamilton explained that he was punished because he served his son as a banquet for the gods. Tityos, a giant, was punished by having two vultures forever tearing out his liver, which grew back constantly, just to be eaten again. "This was his punishment because he had laid violent hands on Leto, the famous consort of Zeus." Another former mortal particularly singled out in Hades was Hercules. According to Odysseus, he stood forever in Hades holding his bow "as if just about to shoot." Only his phantom is in Hades, "but Hercules himself is with the immortal gods, as happy as the day
is long." There is no explanation given for such a singling out as the narrative indicates his heroism only and remains silent about any theological question concerning his blessedness. Hercules, like Aeneas and Odysseus, had made a trip to the underworld while living. As his twelfth labor he had stolen Cerberus, the Hound of Hell, had taken it to earth, and had returned it. This journey is mentioned in both the Odyssey and the Aeneid, but little detail is given, and what is given does not add to our picture of or understanding of the underworld.

Castor and Polydeuces also have a variation of the privilege accorded Hercules. "Zeus granted them the privilege of living on alternate days, so one was always in Olympus, and one in the grave." It is not clear whether on the alternate days they are simply buried in the grave or if they are in Hades. Odysseus does not see them on his journey, and no further explanation is given concerning the reason for such an unusual existence after death.

Although not permanent inhabitants of the underworld, Odysseus and Aeneas certainly need to be considered to some extent. They shared the heroic and classic traits of strength of body and mind, bravery, skill in battle
and council, favor with the gods, and nobility. They each were tested through many years of suffering, through fighting a great battle, and by enduring long sea journeys before they were worthy to approach Hades. Each received instructions from a woman connected with the gods — Odysseus from Circe and Aeneas from the sybil. But they were heroes for two different reasons. The end of Aeneas' journey was the beginning for Rome. He obeyed the stated rules of the gods and merely fulfilled the will of fate. Odysseus is returning, not going. He has something to return to. Odysseus is subject not directly to the will of the gods, nor to himself, but to a mysterious destiny which fulfills itself despite the hatred of Poseidon during these journeys after the Trojan War.
Philosophies of the Poets

In both Homer and Virgil, there are many, many inhabitants of the underworld. Virgil describes several more separate areas in Hades than Homer does. Virgil describes a place for suicides, for infants, for lovers, for heroes. He also draws very definite boundaries between the Hades for the ordinary dead, Tartarus for Titans and the wicked, and Elysium for the Blessed. Homer speaks only once of the Elysian Plains, and describes no different regions of the underworld for different groups of souls. Instead he says that the meadow of asphodel was inhabited by "young men and brides, old men..., tender maidens,...warriors," etc.98 In Homer, too, there appeared to be no actual punishment except that suffered by Tantalos, Sisyphos, and Tityos. The other souls simply existed in a state of emptiness. Virgil definitely listed many crimes for which mortals received physical punishment. This is one of the most obvious differences in the state of the inhabitants of the two underworlds, i.e., that in Virgil's underworld the wicked are punished and the good rewarded and in Homer there is no definite perception of reward and punishment as such.
This contrast between the two underworlds has been a subject of discussion by other writers. T. Frank said:

The culprits of (Virgil's) Tartarus are not merely the legendary offenders against exacting deities... The virtues that win a place in Elysium indicate a fusion of religion with humanitarian sympathies... His Elysium is far removed from Homer's limbo. 99

This difference is enlarged upon and a partial explanation is offered by J. Y. Sellar:

The Sixth book of the Aeneid owes its existence to the eleventh book of the Odyssey, but the shadowy conceptions of the Homeric 'Inferno', suggested by the impulses of natural curiosity and the yearnings of human affection, are enlarged and made more definite, on the one hand, by thoughts derived from Plato, and, on the other, by the proudest memories of Roman history, from the legends of the Alban kings to the warlike and peaceful triumphs of the Augustan Age. 100

The whole of the Sixth Book... is inspired by the feeling of the greater spiritual life which awaits man beyond the grave. ...The sense of devout awe is the chief mark of distinction between the 'Inferno' of Virgil and that of Homer.... The dead do not appear to Virgil merely as the shadowy inhabitants of an unsubstantial world.... In the grandeur of moral belief which inspires Virgil's representation, in his recognition of the everlasting distinction between a life of righteousness and of unrighteousness, of purity and of impurity, he but reproduces the profoundest ethical intuitions of Plato. 101

In Virgil, Anchises explains to Aeneas the nature of body and soul, the reason for the need of an underworld, and why and how spirits become ready to return to earth. This explanation is given in regard to the souls
of the future heroes of Rome as they gather about the
Letho. This philosophy is best explained in Anchises' own words, thus:

'The seed of life is a spark of fire, but the body
A clod of earth, a clog, a mortal burden.
Hence humans fear, desire, grieve, and are joyful,
And even when life is over, all the evil
Ingrained so long, the adulterated mixture,
The plagues and pestilences of the body
Remain, persist. So there must be a cleansing,
By penalty, by punishment, by fire,
By sweep of wind, by water's absolution,
Before the guilt is gone. Each of us suffers
His own peculiar ghost. But the day comes
When we are sent through wide Styxum,
The Fields of the Blessed, a few of us, to linger
Until the turn of time, the wheel of ages,
Washes off the taint, and leaves the core of spirit
Pure sense, pure flame. A thousand years pass over
And the god calls the countless host to Letha
Where memory is annulled, and souls are willing
Once more to enter into mortal bodies. 102

The influence of Plato upon Virgil, as mentioned
by Beller above, is demonstrated vividly by a comparison
of the philosophy of Plato and Anchises. In the Phaedo,
Plato said that the body is an evil and a hindrance. The
soul is a pure spirit, seeking and learning. But man can
never attain to the truth as long as he is burdened with
the body and its many distractions. Only after death and
the destruction of the body may we possess wisdom. Then,
in company with others pure like ourselves, we shall seek
truth. Since death is a freeing of the soul from the
body, the wise man welcomes death.
Plato also believed that everything had an opposite, which it went to or came from or was in the process of becoming. Therefore, life's opposite is death. But the cycle is eternal and, to be complete, the soul, even in death, must be becoming again. Thus the soul in Hades must have a life of some kind, and must be moving toward complete life again, i.e., life on earth. From this comes the philosophy of Anchises in regard to Lethe and the return of the souls of the future great Romans to life again. Nevertheless, there is a difference in reasoning behind this cycle, as Anchises regards it as no mere mechanical action but a means of using a great soul toward the glory of Rome.

By a return to life via Lethe, Virgil obviously is speaking of a kind of immortality for the soul. In contrast, Homer never describes his underworld as leading to any immortality. In fact, it is not clear whether or not the spirits live forever in Hades, as Odysseus mentions no ghost by name older than the second or third generation before him. Dickinson said in regard to this lack of interest in immortality that the Greeks "found joy in life itself, not in the belief of a resurrection."
Comments on the Study

In this section I shall discuss briefly some related concerns which have developed during the course of this study. Some of these ideas were found in secondary source materials and some have grown from consideration of the original sources. They are centered around comparisons of the underworld beliefs of Homer and Virgil as they relate to Christianity.

Both Homer and Virgil use Hermes, or Mercury, as a guide to the underworld, a conductor of the dead to Hades. Also, Hermes comes to Aeneas to guide him, to urge him to open his eyes to his fate and to leave Hades. Aeneas is caught in the worldly life with Hades and must be rescued for a better life of higher spirituality, for his own soul and for the fate of Rome. Thus Hermes fulfills his function as summoner to a better world - in this instance to a metaphorical Elysium even in life as opposed to his usual function as summoner to a life beyond this world. He leads Aeneas away from the sleep of ignorance which is death for the soul. Dido here is symbolic of the pleasures of mortality, which are fatal for the well-being of the soul. Dido is the earth not of spirit, and Aeneas receives the divine help from an agent
of grace which enables him to ascend the path of virtue.\textsuperscript{106}

In both Homer and Virgil, Hades is easy to attain. Every soul properly interred goes to the underworld. But the region of bliss is harder to reach, involves a longer journey, and is open to only a chosen few. Homer had to travel through the entire underworld, except Tartarus, before he could reach Elysium. Only heroes and poets lived there. In Homer, only Achilles is in the Land of the Blessed, and that is through no virtue of his own. As Pearson said: "Paradise is invariably exclusive.\textsuperscript{107}"

This is perfectly in accordance with the Christian concept of a limited entry into Heaven to which the biblical verse "Many are called, but few are chosen" may refer.\textsuperscript{108}

This demonstrates another rather startling relationship between some pagan and Christian beliefs.

Another similarity of belief between these two poets and Christianity is found in the conception of a place of temporary punishment. Each hero had to be tested before he could enter the place of life-after-death. This testing might be comparable with the idea of purgatory, where one must be cleansed before being admitted to Eternity. Ancilis said the soul must be cleansed of its connection with the body, and Elysium was a place of temporary residence and cleansing, just as is purgatory.
In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas could pick the golden bough "if fate is calling." Also, Palinurus, the pilot, died for no reason other than fate, and Aeneas' destiny was completely set by the gods. This whole conception of having no control over one's destiny is somewhat comparable to the idea of predestination held by many Christians.

Many Puritans believed that men were called to Heaven or Hell before birth, and they could do nothing during life to change this verdict.

In other areas there are still other similarities of belief between pagan and Christian. There is always a guardian at the gate of the afterworld. In Homer it is Cerberus, in Virgil it is Cerberus and Tisiphone, in Christianity it is Pater.

The number three has always been sacred to mankind. Mourners in Homer called upon their dead three times at their funerals, and Achilles rode about Patroclus' barrow three times. The Styx encircled Hades nine times, a square of three. In Christianity, three is associated with the Trinity.

The afterworld in any time is associated with worldly pleasures or indescribable glory. In Virgil, Elysium is pleasant because the heroes can do whatever they enjoyed doing in life. Omar Khayyam sang of wine,
food, and women. Many modern concepts center around a Heaven of great magnificence made pleasurable by the presence of an infinite God.

Throughout this paper, the underworlds of Homer and Virgil have been discussed, compared, and contrasted. They have also been likened to more recent beliefs in a life-after-death. In all ages there seems to have been a need for man to believe in some form of after-life. The afterworld as described in literature seems to be colored by the times and ideas of the authors, and this was as true for Homer and Virgil as for any modern writer. The underworlds of Homer and Virgil serve as examples of great story-telling, great invention, and a fusion of their beliefs with ideas and hopes for a personal life after death.
Footnotes


17 *Iliad*, p. 89.


April visitors to Greece think it a cheerful omen, but a little later it loses this happy quality. It often grows in graveyards and other deserted places.

31 Asphodel is a flower which grows in Greece. In Thomas A. Saymou:, Life in the Homeric Age (New York, 1907), p. 467.

32 Odyssey, p. 126.

33 Ibid., p. 246.


36 Ibid., pp. 52-53.

37 Iliad, p. 227.

38 Odyssey, p. 114.


40 Odyssey, p. 62.

41 Ibid., p. 118.
42 Iliad, p. 266.
43 Seymour, p. 458.
44 Odyssey, c. 246.
46 Ibid., p. 215.
47 Ibid., p. 197.
48 Iliad, p. 105.
49 Hamilton, Mythology, p. 29.
50 Iliad, p. 139.
51 Hamilton, Mythology, p. 40.
52 Aeneid, p. 152.
53 Odyssey, p. 246.
54 Aeneid, p. 95.
55 Ibid., p. 366.
56 Ibid., p. 193.
57 Ibid., p. 163.
58 Ibid., p. 189.
59 Hamilton, Mythology, p. 40.
61 Iliad, p. 195.
62 Aeneid, p. 293.
63 Odyssey, p. 116.
64 Ibid., p. 123.
65 [Ibid.], p. 120.
66 [Ibid.], p. 168.
67 [Iliad], p. 257.
68 [Odyssey], p. 114.
69 [Ibid.], p. 117.
70 Seymour, p. 463.

72 [Iliad], p. 246.
73 [Iliad], p. 370.
74 [Odyssey], p. 125.
75 [Ibid.], p. 117.
76 [Ibid.], p. 124.
77 [Iliad], p. 293.
78 [Ibid.], p. 267.
79 [Iliad], p. 359.
80 [Iliad], pp. 266-267.
81 [Iliad].


84 [Iliad], pp. 156-157.
85 [Odyssey], p. 126.
86 [Ibid.], p. 122.
87 Hamilton, Mythology, p. 151.
88 **Aeneid**, p. 158.
89 **Ibid.**, p. 163.
90 **Odyssey**, p. 82.
92 **Ibid.**, p. 237.
93 **Odyssey**, pp. 126-127.
94 **Ibid.**, p. 127.
95 **Ibid.**
96 **Ibid.**, footnote p. 121.
100 Sellars, p. 323.
101 **Ibid.**, pp. 373-374.
102 **Aeneid**, p. 169.
104 Seymour, pp. 465-466.
107 **Ibid.**, p. 36.
109 **Aeneid**, pp. 143-149.
110 Buxton, p. 74.
Bibliography


