

CAI-T Schools' Lecture Day

University College Dublin



Aeneas flees the Cyclopes

Odysseus and Aeneas as Heroes

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Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer: Opening Lines

***Aeneid* 1.1:**

I sing of arms and the man...

***Iliad* 1.1:**

Sing, goddess, the anger of Achilles, Peleus' son...

***Odyssey* 1.1:**

Tell, me, Muse, the story of that resourceful man...

Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey*: Parallels

***Aeneid* 1:** Storm and shipwreck; scene with the gods (Jupiter and Venus); arrival at Carthage

***Odyssey* 5-7:** Storm and shipwreck; scene with the gods (Calypso and Hermes); arrival at Phaeacia

***Aeneid* 2:** Aeneas recounts the fall of Troy

***Odyssey* 8:** Demodocus sings of the fall of Troy

***Aeneid* 3:** Aeneas tells the story of his wanderings

***Odyssey* 9-12:** Odysseus tells the story of his wanderings

***Aeneid* 4:** Aeneas leaves Dido

***Odyssey* 5:** Odysseus leaves Calypso

***Aeneid* 5: Funeral games for Anchises**

***Iliad* 23:** Funeral games for Patroclus

***Aeneid* 6: Journey to the Underworld**

***Odyssey* 11:** Journey to the Underworld

Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer

- The first half of the *Aeneid* broadly corresponds to the *Odyssey*, the second half to the *Iliad*
- Virgil refashions Homeric episodes in the service of his own narrative

Virgil responds to his detractors (Suetonius, *Life of Virgil* 46):

“It is easier to steal the club of Hercules than a line from Homer.”

The Beginning of Homer's *Odyssey* (1.1–5)

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns
driven time and again off course, once he had plundered
the hallowed heights of Troy.

Many cities of men he saw and learned their minds,
many pains he suffered heartsick on the open sea,
fighting to save his life and bring his companions home.

Translation by Robert Fagles

The Beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1.1–7)

Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy,
exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavine shores; much buffeted
on sea and land by violence from above, through cruel Juno's
unforgiving wrath, and much enduring in war also, **till he**
should build a city and bring his gods to Latium; whence came
the Latin race, the lords of Alba, and the lofty walls of Rome.

Translation by David West

- Odysseus is returning home; Aeneas is an exile
- The *Aeneid* is a story of origins, an aetiology of Rome and Romanness

Odysseus in the Sea-Storm

“Three, four times blessed my friends-in-arms,
Who died on the plains of Troy those years,
Serving the sons of Atreus to the end. Would to god
I’d died there too and met my fight that day the Trojans,
Swarms of them, hurled at me with bronze spears,
Fighting over the corpse of proud Achilles!
A hero’s funeral then, my glory spread by comrades –
Now what a wretched death I’m doomed to die!”

Odyssey 5.306-311



Aeneas in the Sea-Storm

“Those whose fate it was to die beneath the high walls of Troy **with their fathers looking down on them** were many, many times more fortunate than I. O Diomedes, bravest of the Greeks, why could I not have fallen to your right hand and breathed out my life on the plains of Troy, where fierce Hector fell by the sword of Achilles, where great Sarpedon lies and where the river Simois caught up so many shields and helmets and bodies of brave men and rolled them down its current?”

Aeneid 1.94-101

Memories of Troy – Aeneas at Buthrotum

“As I walked I recognised a little Troy, a citadel modelled on great Pergamum and a dried-up stream they called the Xanthus. There was the Scaean Gate and I embraced it. Nor were my Trojans slow to enjoy this Trojan city with me.”

Aeneid 3.349-352

Memories of Troy – Aeneas at Carthage

“If the Fates were leaving me free to live my own life and settle all my cares according to my own wishes, my first concern would be to tend the city of Troy those of my dear people who survive. A lofty palace of Priam would still be standing and with my own hands I would have built a new citadel at Pergamum for those who have been defeated.”

Aeneid 4.340-344

Memories of Troy – Aeneas at Troy

“You are the bravest of all our warriors, and your bravery is in vain ... Let us die. Let us rush into the thick of the fighting. The one safety for the defeated is to have no hope of safety.

These words added madness to their courage. From that moment, like wolves foraging blindly on a misty night, driven out of their lairs by a ravening hunger that gives them no rest and leaving their young behind to wait for them with their throats all dry, we ran the gauntlet of the enemy to certain death...”

Aeneid 2.348-359

Pius Aeneas

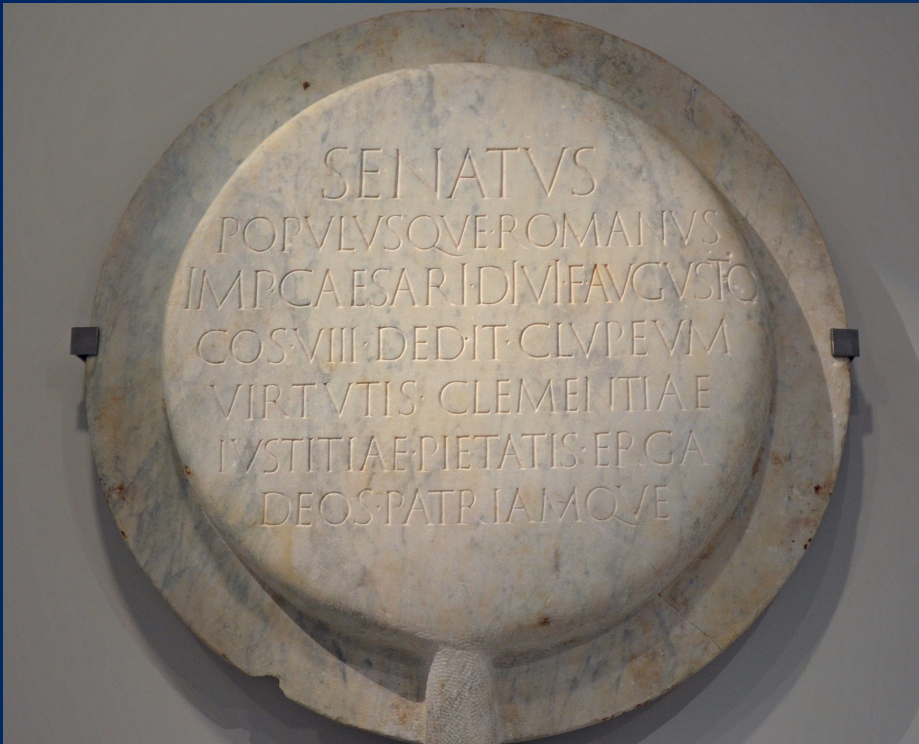
- Aeneas is still a Homeric-style hero at Troy in *Aeneid* 2
- However, he gradually develops into a new kind of hero, defined by the Roman virtue of *pietas* = sense of duty to homeland, family, and gods

Aeneas introduces himself to his mother Venus:

“I am Aeneas, known for my devotion [*pius*]. I carry with me on my ships the gods of my home, the Penates, wrested from my enemies, and my fame has reached beyond the skies. I am searching for my fatherland in Italy.”

Aeneid 1.378-380

Augustus and *pietas*



Marble copy of the *Clipeus Virtutis* (Shield of Virtue) from Arles in S. France, 26 BC:

SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS
IMP(eratori) CAESARI DIVI F(ilio)
AVGVSTO CO(n)S(uli) VIII DEDIT
CLVPEVM VIRTVTIS CLEMENTIAE
IVSTITIAE PIETATIS ERGA DEOS
PATRIAMQVE ("The senate and the
Roman people give to Augustus, son of the
divine Caesar, in his 8th consulate, the
shield for virtue, clemency, justice, and
pietas towards the gods and his native
land")

Augustus, *Res Gestae* 34:

...a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia whose inscription testified that the senate and the Roman people gave me this in recognition of my valour, my clemency, my justice, and my *pietas*.

pietas – Aeneas and Augustus

Aeneas leaving Troy (Aeneid 3.12–13):

“I was an exile taking to the high seas with my comrades and my son, with the gods of our house and the great gods of our people.”

Augustus on the Shield of Aeneas (Aeneid 8.675-679):

In the middle were the bronze-armoured fleets of the battle of Actium. There before your eyes the battle was drawn up with the whole of the headland of Leucas seething and all the waves gleaming in gold. On one side was Augustus Caesar, leading the men of Italy into battle alongside the Senate and People of Rome, its gods of home and its great gods.

Aeneas in the Underworld (*Aeneid* 6)

- Odysseus journeys to the Underworld to consult the shade of the seer Teiresias in *Odyssey* 11; Aeneas journeys to the Underworld to meet the shade of his father Anchises
- Teiresias reveals Odysseus' future; Anchises reveals the future of the Roman people
- An important step in Aeneas' Roman education



Odysseus, seated between Eurylochos and Perimedes, consulting the shade of Teiresias. Lucanian calyx crater; S. Italy, c. 380 BC



Aeneas and the shade of Anchises; Biagio Manfredi, 1780

Aeneas in the Underworld (*Aeneid* 6)

Anchises instructs Aeneas (*Aeneid* 6.851-853):

“Your task, Roman, and do not forget it, will be to govern the peoples of the world in your empire. These will be your arts – and to impose a settled pattern upon peace, to pardon the defeated and war down the proud.”

Augustus, *Res Gestae* 3:

I undertook civil and foreign wars on land and sea throughout the whole world, and as victor I spared all the citizens who survived. I preferred to save rather than to cut down the foreign races that could be pardoned in safety.

Aeneas at War

“Alas! What slaughter waits upon the unhappy Laurentines!
What a punishment Turnus will endure at my hands! How
many shields and helmets and bodies of brave men will
Father Thybris roll down beneath his waves.”

Aeneid 8.537-540

Summary

- *Aeneid* 1-6 draws extensively on Homer's *Odyssey*
 - Aeneas starts off as a hero in the Homeric mould (see Aeneas at Troy in Book 2)
- However...
 - Aeneas' goal is to found a new civilization
 - He learns to subordinate himself to fate and the needs of his people. Aeneas leaves the world of Homer and Troy behind.
 - Aeneas becomes a new kind of hero, who embodies the Roman (and Augustan) virtue of *pietas*