

The Muses' Playground

The turning point: *Aen.* 5

Book 5

- As a more successful re-write of the events of Book 4
- Allowing Aeneas to overcome the 'elegiac' challenge of Book 4
- Allowing Vergil to establish Aeneas as a trustworthy leader (aka epic hero) before his landing in Italy in Book 6

First half of Book 5

- Funeral games in honour of Anchises corresponding to
 - The games held in the court of Alcinoo in the *Odyssey*
 - The funeral games in honour of Patroclus in the *Iliad*
- Book 5 is the turning point between the 'Odysseic' and the 'Iliadic' half of the *Aeneid*
- At this moment Fortune first changed and turned against them. (5.604)

The fake Beroe

...till she came within sight of the great assembly. She then passed along the shore and saw the empty harbour and unattended ships. But there, far apart on the deserted beach, were the women of Troy, weeping for loss of Anchises and weeping, all of them, as they looked out over the unfathomable sea. How weary they were, how numberless the breakers and how vast the sea that still remained for them to cross! These were the words on all their lips. What they were praying for was a city – they were heart sick of toiling with the sea. Iris knew how to cause mischief. She rushed into the middle of them, laying aside her divine form and dress and appearing as Beroe, the aged wife of Doryclus of Tmaros, a woman of good birth, who had borne sons and been held in high regard. In this guise she mingled with the mothers of Troy. (5.611-622)

- The middle – the narrative reaches a watershed too
- The women in a holding pattern
- Isolation of the women
- At this point, the Trojan women have lost not only Anchises, but emotionally, they have also lost sight of the ancestral and familial ties that give purpose to their suffering
- ...yet it is only Iris (in the guise of Beroe) who complains:

Iris' appeal

'O my unhappy people, for what manner of destruction is Fortune preserving you? This is the seventh summer since the fall of Troy that we have been driven by the winds and have measured every sea and land, every inhospitable rock and every angry star, rolling for ever on the waves as we search the mighty ocean for an Italy that ever recedes. Here we are in the land of our brother Eryx and Acestes is our host. Who is to prevent us from laying down the foundations of walls and giving a city to our people? (5.624-631)

- Lack of purpose
- Hopelessness
- Lack of leadership

Iris' appeal

I call upon our native land and household gods snatched from the hands of our enemies to no purpose, tell us, will there never again be walls that will be called the walls of Troy? Shall I never see a place with the rivers that Hector knew, the Xanthus and the Simois? It is too much to endure! Come with me now and set fire to these accursed ships and destroy them. I have seen in a dream the image of the priestess Cassandra putting blazing torches in my hand and saying: 'This is your home. This is where you must find Troy.' [...] The minds of the women of Troy were roused and their hearts were bewildered,

- ...randomness
- The backward glance: the dangers of nostalgia
 - Cf. Andromache *Aen.* 3!
- Suggests the use of fire
- Is successful in rousing the women to madness and bewilderment

A good choice? Will Iris succeed?

- She rushed into the middle of them, laying aside her divine form and dress and appearing as Beroe, the aged wife of Doryclus of Tmaros, a woman of good birth, who had borne sons and been held in high regard.
- Iris giving up her divine form – does she give up some of her power too?
- The choice of Beroe
- Isolation vs connectedness

Flashbacks

- The content and phrasing of the women's passage recall passages from Book 4:
- Aeneas drawn into overseeing building works in Carthage – to the detriment of his own epic project
- Aeneas susceptible to the pull of the past recalled by 'Beroe's' mentions of the rivers of Troy
- The choice of fire as a weapon – wielded, here, too, by a woman
- 'you will soon see her ships churning the sea and deadly torches blazing and the shore soon seething with flames, if the morning catches on you lingering on these shores'
- This was when the devout Aeneas tore the cloak off his shoulders and called upon the gods for help, stretching out his hands and praying: 'All-powerful Jupiter, if you do not yet abhor the whole race of Trojans, if your loving-kindness still looks as of old on the labours of men, grant now, O Father, that our fleet escape the flames. Save from destruction what little remains to the Trojans [...]

Resistance

[...] but one of the many, the oldest of them all, Pyrgo, who had been royal nurse to all the sons of Priam, called out: This is not Beroe speaking to you [...]. I have just left Beroe sick and fretting because she was the only one who could not come to this ceremony and would not be paying due honour to Anchises.' These were the words of Pyrgo.

- Restarting the story
- Connections of both women
 - They were ashamed of what they had done and ashamed to look upon the light of day. Their wits were restored now and they recognised their own people. Juno was cast out of their hearts.
- Connections to the opening of the women's episode and the 'renewal of fortune'
- ...can things turn once more?
- Disappointment: Iris is once more successful
 - Value of being revealed

Ascanius and Aeneas

Ascanius was happily leading the cavalry manoeuvres, so he made off to the troubled camp at full gallop although the breathless trainers tried in vain to hold him. 'Look at me! I am your own Ascanius!'

He had been wearing a helmet as he stirred the images of war.

'What new madness is this?'

- Ascanius as a stand-in for Aeneas: similarities in preceeding descriptions of Iris returning to the sky and Mercury descending in Book 4
- Move from mock-danger to real danger
- Family connections
- Using Dido's horse
- Calling the women 'cives'
- Connections back to the opening of the episode and the 'renewal of fortune'

Testing Aeneas

Book 5

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Book 4

[he saw] Aeneas laying the foundations of the citadel and putting up buildings. His sword was studded with yellow stars of jasper, and glowing with Tyrian purple there hung from his shoulders a rich cloak given him by Dido into which she had woven a fine cross-thread of gold.

Downpour

- While all this was happening a great rumble of thunder began to stir in the sky. Down came the rain and the hail, and Tyrian huntsmen, men of Troy and Ascanius of the line of Dardanus and grandson of Venus, scattered in fright all over the fields, making for shelter as rivers of water came rushing down the mountains. Dido and the leader of the Trojans took refuge together in the same cave.
- In 5, the rain follows on Aeneas' prayer and helps avert disaster:
- it poured down and filled the ships and soaked the charred timbers till all the fire was quenched and, except for four that were lost, all the ships were saved from destruction. (5.697-699)
- Methodical survey of the scene, taking stock of number of ships
- Implies that Aeneas is a methodical leader
- => Book 5 re-writes the thunderstorm episode and gives it a positive conclusion

Handling hesitation

- [his heart was heavy] as he turned his thoughts this way and that, wondering whether he should forget about his destiny and settle in the fields of Sicily, or whether he ought to make for the shores of Italy (Aeneas, Book 5)
- ‘Have you entirely forgotten your own kingdom and your own destiny?’ (Mercury, Book 4)
- Narrative turning point?
- What will Aeneas do?
- Book 4: Hasty departure
- Book 5: Consultation with Nautes and careful deliberation
- Nautes carefully introduced
- Aeneas still wavers
- Decision making is allowed to take time – Aeneas is shown as less rash

Departure

- Meanwhile, Aeneas was ploughing the city bounds and allotting homes to his people. This was to be Ilium, and this was to be Troy. Trojan Acestes was delighting in his kingdom, choosing a site for his forum, summoning a senate and laying down a code of laws.
- Similarities with standard order of founding a city and establishing allies
- Shows understanding for all his people – a good *pater* to his people

Letting go: Book 5

At last came the command to sacrifice three calves to Eryx and a lamb to the Storms and to cast off their moorings **in due order**. There stood Aeneas **alone on the prow**, his head bound with a wreath of trimmed olive leaves and holding a goblet in his hand as he scattered the sacrificial entrails and poured the streaming wine into the salt sea. His **men vied with one another to strike the waves, sweeping them with their oars as a freshening wind from astern helped them on their way.**

Between fiction and fact



Letting go: Book 4

He called Mnestheus, Sergestus and brave Seretus and ordered them to fit out the fleet and tell no one, to muster the men on the shore with their equipment at the ready, and keep secret the reason for the change of plan. In the meantime, since the good queen knew nothing and the last thing she expected was the shattering of such a great love, he himself would try to make approaches to her and find the kindest time to speak and the best way to handle the matter. They were delighted to receive their orders and carried them out immediately.

[...] into the blackness of the night and Aeneas was immediately awake, terrified by the sudden apparition. There was no more rest for his men, as he roused them to instant action: 'Wake up and sit to your benches,' he shouted. 'Let out the sails and quick about it. A god has been sent down again from the heights of heaven – I have just seen him – spurring us on to cut our plaited ropes and run from here. [...] As he spoke he drew his sword from its scabbard like a flash of lightning and struck the mooring cables with the naked steel. In that instant they were all seized by the same ardour and set to, hauling and hustling. The shore was emptied. The sea could not be seen for ships. Bending to the oars they whipped up the foam and swept the blue surface of the ocean.

Cutting the cable

