

The Muses' Playground: The *Aeneid* and Myth

A) Troy

i) Aeneas at Troy

fated to survive and rule over his people; taken up as mythical founder by Romans

1) “.. He [Aeneas] always makes gifts which are pleasing to the gods who hold the wide heaven. So come, let us take him out of death's way, or it may be that the son of Kronos too will be angry, if Achilleus kills this man: it is fated that he should survive, so that the line of Dardanos should not perish without seed or trace, since the son of Kronos loved Dardanos more than all the other children borne to him by mortal women. The son of Kronos has come to hate Priam's line: and now the mighty Aineias will be king over the Trojans, and his children's children born in future time.” (Hom. *Il.* 20.298-308; tr. Hammond)

2) “I sing of arms and of the man, fated to be an exile, who long since left the land of Troy and came to Italy to the shores of Lavinium This was the beginning of the Latin race, the Alban fathers and the high walls of Rome.” (Verg. *Aen.* 1.1-7; tr. West)

founding of Rome by Romulus, 753 BC; Troy allegedly fell, 1184 BC

3) “he [Ascanius] shall transfer his kingdom from its seat at Lavinium and build a city with powerful fortifications at Alba Longa. Here the rule of a race of Hector will last for three hundred long years until Ilia the royal priestess, heavy with the seed of Mars, shall give birth to twin sons. Then Romulus shall receive the people ... The walls he builds will be the walls of Mars and he shall give his own name to the people, the Romans.” (Verg. *Aen.* 1.270-77)

famed for piety (as in the *Aeneid*) but also tradition of ill-will between him and Priam (abandoned by Vergil: pious and reluctant ruler)

4) “[Aeneas] kept up a constant anger against godlike Priam, because he would show him no honour, for all that he was a leading man among them,” (Hom. *Il.* 13.460-1 tr. Hammond)

5) “Aineias, why have you come so far out from your ranks to take your stand here? Does your heart urge you to fight me in the hope that you will take Priam's royal position over the horse-taming Trojans? But if you do kill me, that is no reason for Priam to hand you this honour-.... Or it may be that the Trojans have set aside for you the finest piece of land ... if you kill me? But I think you will not find that easy.” (Achilles, Hom. *Il.* 20.178-86)

6) “I rushed to bring relief to the palace of my king, to help its defenders, to put heart into men who were defeated.” (Verg. *Aen.* 2.451-2)

ii) Aeneas at the fall of Troy

why was Aeneas saved in tradition? Greeks impressed by his piety (e.g. Timaeus; Apollodorus); ties of hospitality and attempts at making peace (e.g. Livy); betrayed Troy (e.g. Menecrates of Xanthus); not in city at the time (by chance or following divine warnings)

7) “Aeneas took up his father Anchises and fled, and the Greeks let him alone on account of

his piety.” (Apollodorus *Epitome* V.21; tr. J. G. Frazer)

8) “First of all, then it is generally agreed that when Troy was taken vengeance was wreaked upon the other Trojans, but that two, Aeneas and Antenor, were spared all the penalties of war by the Achivi, owing to long-standing claims of hospitality, and because they had always advocated peace and the giving back of Helen.” (Livy I.i.1; tr. B. O. Foster)

9) “But Menecrates of Xanthus says that Aeneas betrayed the city to the Achaeans out of hatred for Alexander and that because of this service he was permitted by them to save his household. The account, ..., runs ...: ‘The Achaeans were oppressed with grief and felt that the army had had its head lopped off. However, they celebrated his funeral feast and made war with all their might til Ilium was taken up by the aid of Aeneas, who delivered it up to them. For Aeneas, being scorned by Alexander and excluded from his prerogatives, overthrew Priam; and having accomplished this, he became one of the Achaeans’.” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus I.48.3; tr. E. Cary)

10) “Others say that he chanced to be tarrying at that time at the station where the Trojan ships lay; and others that he had been sent with a force into Phrygia by Priam upon some military expedition.” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus I.48.4; tr. E. Cary)

11) “Sophocles, the tragic poet, in his drama *Laocoön* represents Aeneas, just before the taking of the city, as removing his household to Mount Ida in obedience to the orders of his father Anchises, who recalled the injunctions of Aphrodite and from the omens that had lately happened in the case of Laocoön’s family conjectured the approaching destruction of the city.” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus I.48.2; tr. E. Cary)

12) “In the hour of your fall I did not flinch from the weapons of the Greeks or from anything they could do. If it had been my fate to fall, my right hand fully earned it.” (Verg. *Aen.* 2.432-4)

Vergilian Aeneas fights and escapes with divine aid: emphasizes the destiny of Rome; protects Aeneas’ honour.

13) “Escape, my son, escape with all haste. Put an end to your struggle. I shall not leave your side till I see you safely standing on the threshold of your father’s door.” (Venus, Verg. *Aen.* 2.619-20)

14) “Into your care she [Troy] now commends her sacraments and her household gods. Take them to share your fate. Look for a great city to establish for them after long wanderings across the sea.” (Hector to Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 2.293-5)

15) “But with respect to the future he reasoned very properly that it would be impossible to save a city the greater part of which was already in the possession of the enemy, and he therefore decided to abandon the wall, bare of defenders to the enemy and to save the inhabitants themselves as well as the holy objects inherited from their fathers and all the valuables he could carry away” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus I.46.2-3; tr. E. Cary)

16) “he marched away with the rest of the fugitives in good order, carrying with him in the best chariots his father and the gods of his country, together with his wife and children and whatever else, either person or thing, was most precious.” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus I.46.4;

tr. E. Cary)

NB flawed leader (unprepared, unsure, unsuccessful), plunged into role. Destiny involves effort

17) "Frenzy and anger drove me on and suddenly it seemed a noble thing to die in arms" (Verg. *Aen.* 2.316-7)

iii) Aeneas' departure from Troy

fewer real companions; just one (young) son: isolation and responsibility; succession

18) "As for Aeneas, after his fleet was ready, he embarked with the rest of his sons and his father, taking with him the images of the gods and crossing the Hellespont, sailed to the nearest peninsula, which lies in front of Europe and is called Pallene." (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.47.6; tr. E. Cary)

19) "You must ask for no more, my boy, in this war" (Verg. *Aen.* 9.656)

B) Journey to Italy

Aeneid 1-6; 7 years (Dionysius of Halicarnassus: 2 years)

20) "Aeneas driven from home by a similar misfortune, but guided by fate to undertakings of greater consequence, came first to Macedonia; thence was carried, in his quest of a place of settlement, to Sicily; and from Sicily laid his course towards the land of Laurentum." (Livy I.i.4; tr. B. O. Foster)

<u>Dionysius</u>	<u>Livy</u>	<u>Vergil</u>
Thrace	Macedonia	Thrace (3.13ff.)
Delos	Sicily	Delos (3.73-120)
Cythera	Laurentum in Italy	Crete (3.121-191)
Arcadia		Strophades (3.209ff.)
Zacynthus		
Leucas		
Actium		Leucas/Actium (3.274-89)
Ambracia		
Buthrotum		Buthrotum (3.294-505)
Dodona		
Onchesmus		Acroceraunia (3.506ff.)
Castrum Minervae		Castrum Minervae (3.531ff.)
Lacinium		Scylla/Charybdis (3.554ff.)
Sicily -inc. Drepanum		Cyclops' island/Etna (3.569ff.)
Italy		Drepanum (3.707ff.)
		Carthage (Books 1 and 4)
		Sicily (Book 5; funeral games)
		Cumae (Book 6)
		Italy (Book 7)

i) tidies up e.g. avoids inconsistencies in legend (varying traditions concerning Anchises' death)

ii) allows praise of Augustus (e.g. shield dedication at Actium, Verg. *Aen.* 3.286-8)

iii) enhances episodes with emphasis on death and failure (Polydorus' corpse at Thrace; Andromache at Buthrotum)

21) "It is Polydorus that speaks. This is where I was struck down and an iron crop of weapons covered my body. Their sharp points have rooted and grown in my flesh." (Verg. *Aen.* 3.45-6)

iv) addition of mythical episodes e.g. Harpies (on Strophades)- link with Apollonius; connection with Odysseus' adventures (Polyphemus)- link with Homer

v) Carthage: meeting previously in Naevius but probably not love. Dido's death e.g. in Timaeus (suicide on pyre to avoid Iarbas) but Vergil links to Aeneas; Anna suicide in Varro. *Aeneid*: origin of conflict with Carthage

22) "Varro says that it was not Dido but Anna who was driven by love of Aeneas to kill herself on the pyre" (Servius supplemented on Verg. *Aen.* 4.682)

23) "As for you, my Tyrians, you must pursue with hatred the whole line of his descendants in time to come. Make that your offering to my shade. Let there be no love between our peoples and no treaties. Arise from my dead bones, O my unknown avenger, and harry the race of Dardanus with fire and sword" (Verg. *Aen.* 4.622-6)

C) Arrival in Italy

fighting of Turnus, Latins and Mezentius against Trojans in Books 9 and 10; arrival of Etruscans with Aeneas in Book 10; Book 11: truce then renewed fighting; Book 12 treaty; treaty broken; single combat between Aeneas and Turnus

24) "According to Cato, the truth of the history was this: that Aeneas came with his father to Italy and fought Latinus and Turnus on account of the seized fields, in which battle Latinus died; that afterwards Turnus fled to Mezentius and relying on his help, restarted war, in which both Aeneas and Turnus were killed; that after Ascanius and Mezentius moved into war but fought in single combat and, after Mezentius was killed Ascanius began to be called Iulus from the down of his first beard which arose at the time of his victory" (Cato fr. 9 =Servius on l.267)

i) Vergil compresses events in sources

ii) Vergilian Aeneas fights Turnus and Latinus (contrast main tradition where Latinus makes peace with Aeneas and fights Turnus)

25) "It is said that Aeneas, along with his father Anchises and his son Ascanius, after putting in at Laurentum, which was on the shore near Ostia and the Tiber, founded a city a little above the sea, within about twenty-four stadia from it; and Latinus, the king of the aborigines, who lived in this place where Rome now is, on making them a visit, used Aeneas

and his people as allies against the neighbouring Rutuli who occupied Ardea (the distance from Ardea to Rome is one hundred and sixty stadia), and after his victory founded a city near by, naming it after his daughter Lavinia; and when the Rutuli joined battle again, Latinus fell, but Aeneas was victorious, became king, and called his subjects “Latini”.” (Strabo 5.3.2; tr. H. L. Jones)

26) “Landing there, the Trojans, as men who, after all their but immeasurable wanderings, had nothing left but their swords and ships, were driving booty from the fields, when King Latinus and the Aborigines, who then occupied that country, rushed down from their city and their fields to repel with arms the violence of the invaders. From this point the tradition follows two lines. Some say that Latinus, having been defeated in the battle, made a peace with Aeneas, and later an alliance of marriage. Others maintain that when the opposing lines had been drawn up, Latinus did not wait for the charge to sound, but advanced amidst his chieftains and summoned the captain of the strangers to a parley. He then enquired what men they were, whence they had come, what mishap had caused them to leave their home, and what they had sought in landing on the coast of Laurentum ... Filled with wonder at renown of the race and the hero, and at his spirit, prepared alike for war or peace, he gave him his right hand in solemn pledge of lasting friendship.” (Livy I.i.5-8; tr. B. O. Foster)

iii) killing enemies (Mezentius; esp. Turnus): no threats left

iv) Evander, Pallas and their Arcadians brought into war by Vergil (pastoral interlude; Hercules myth; revenge)

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