

Pietas in Vergil's *Aeneid*

Dr. Alan Haffa

Please Silence Cell Phones

Adopt and Adapt

- ▶ Vergil adopts and adapts both Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- ▶ First six books are an *Odyssey* and last six an *Iliad*
- ▶ Aeneas as an Achilles, who is more loyal to his comrades in war, and an Odysseus, who is trustworthy and who sacrifices for something greater than himself—his family and people.

The *Aeneid* as a Myth of Roman Origins

- ▶ Explain the origins of the Romans
 - Explain the conflict with the Greeks and show Roman superiority
 - Explain the conflict with the Carthaginians
 - Divine Origins of Julius Caesar's family (Venus as mother of Aeneas)



Offer a mythic resolution of Roman Civil conflict

- ▶ Heterogeneous origins of Romans (Trojan; Etruscan; Greek; Latin)
- ▶ Offer a mythic analogy to **Roman Civil Wars**
- ▶ Explain why **Latin is the language** of Romans
- ▶ Explain **divine plan**, which legitimates Rome as world conqueror
- ▶ Provide a moral foundation for this Empire:
Pietas
- ▶ Praise Roman Empire under **Augustus**—from the origins of Rome the gods intended Rome and Augustus' rule

Book 3: Aeneas' Odyssey



Journey and Sacrifice

- ▶ Wife: Creusa lost in escape from Troy
- ▶ Ghost of Polydorus, Slain by Thracians; Dante (Broken branch and blood)
- ▶ Women who burn ships in Sicily, abandoned
- ▶ Dido, who commits suicide
- ▶ Father Anchises, who dies
- ▶ Palinurus falls off ship as it sail to Italy from Siciliy

Tragedy of Dido

- ▶ Juno and Venus Plot a “Wedding”
- ▶ Jove, Mercury: “Leave for the future of your son”
Pietas
- ▶ Dido’s Supplication; Aeneas’ Answer: No marriage; Love of Country and Son and Father Urge him On
- ▶ “I sail for Italy not of my own free will”



Curse of Dido and the Madness of Women

- ▶ Madness (**Furentem**: Same adjective that described her when she fell in love) of Dido:
Resolves to commit Suicide
- ▶ Makes a shrine of their bed with his clothes:
Immolates herself on it
- ▶ “If he must find a haven...let him see the unmerited deaths of those around him, and accepting peace on unjust terms...let him fall in battle, unable to enjoy his new kingdom...O my Tyrians, besiege with hate his progeny and all his race to come...No love, no pact between our peoples”

Interpretation

- ▶ Metaphors convey psychology of Madness and Despair: flames and madness and Furies; She represents Passion opposed to Reason
- ▶ Despite her madness, she is painted more sympathetically than the Greeks and Ulysses; Perhaps the legacy of the Greeks was a greater threat to Roman Pride than the memories of the Carthaginian Empire

Descent to Hades

- ▶ Epic Tradition and Praise of Augustus
- ▶ Sees the Future of Rome: Romulus, “Caesar, and all the line of Iulus”; “this is the man, this one, of whom so often you have heard the promise, Caesar Augustus, son of the deified, who shall bring once again an age of Gold...”
- ▶ Clouds of Civil War: Brutus, who slew his sons
- ▶ “You must not blind your hearts to that enormity of civil war, turning against your country’s very heart...”
- ▶ Artes Romani: “to pacify, to impose the rule of law, to spare the conquered, battle down the proud.”
- ▶ Laments the death of Marcellus, son of Augustus who died

Shield of Aeneas

- ▶ Arms for Aeneas (like Achilles); Various Roman Legends depicted; Actium Described; “Antoninus with barbaric wealth and a diversity of arms...leading the powers of the East, of Egypt, even of distant Bactra...And in his wake the Egyptian consort came so Shamefully...”
- ▶ Barbaric Gods of East pitted against Roman Gods
- ▶ “Miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet” He marveled and ignorant of the events, he rejoiced in the pictures” Does his lack of understanding cloud the political message?

War between Latins and Romans: Pietas and Supplication

- ▶ War with Latins over Latin princess, Lavinia
- ▶ Trojans and Arcadian Greeks versus Latins and Etruscans
- ▶ Turnus (Latin leader) poetically styled after Achilles
- ▶ Pallas killed by Turnus; puts on his sword belt (story of Danaus, Aegyptus and Danaids; familial civil war?) Ill omened
- ▶ Aeneas' Rage: denies supplications;

Supplication of Magus

- ▶ “I pray you by your father’s ghost and by your hope of Iulus’ rising power, preserve a life here, for a father and a son. I have a great house. Hidden deep within are bars of engraved silver, weights of gold both finished and unfinished. Victory for Trojans cannot hinge on this one case; this one life cannot weigh so much.”
- ▶ Aeneas: “Those bars of gold and silver that you tell of, spare for your sons. Turnus has already done away with such war-trade, Pallas being lost. My father Anchises’ ghost feels as I say, and so does Iulus.”

Mezentius and Lausus

- ▶ Sacrifice of son for father reawakens Aeneas' Pietas
- ▶ "O poor young soldier, how will Aeneas reward your splendid fight? How honor you, in keeping with your nature? Keep the arms you loved to use, for I return you to your forebears, ash and shades, if this concerns you now. Unlucky boy, one consolation for sad death is this: you die by the sword thrust of great Aeneas."
- ▶ He lifts the body (Achilles) and hands it over for burial with the Armor

Problem of Poetic Resolution

- ▶ Latin War Recalls Roman Civil Wars
- ▶ Aeneas' Proposal: "For myself, I ask no kingdom. Let both nations, both unconquered, both subject to equal laws, commit themselves to an eternal union."
- ▶ Juno and Jove Debate the End: Language and Name of Latins will Remain;

Supplication and Death of Turnus

- ▶ Appeal by Father
- ▶ Aeneas undecided; Sees Pallas' Belt and is enraged: "This wound will come from Pallas: Pallas makes this offering and from your criminal blood exacts his due." Turnus's spirit, *indignata*, groans and flees to the underworld.
- ▶ Lack of Resolution calls into question Pax Romana

Conclusion

- ▶ Propaganda: End of Civil Wars; Unification of Italian Peoples into Roman; Caesar Deified; Antony and Cleopatra (Dido) vilified
- ▶ Aeneas represents Roman Virtues: Steadfast, Courageous, Dutiful, Pious, Warlike, Just, Loyal,
- ▶ Anchises' admonition: Spare the Conquered, War down the Proud"
- ▶ Reputed Mercy of Julius Caesar