

Humanities 2

Lecture 3

REVIEW: BOOK I OF THE AENEID AS A BOOK OF NARRATIONS AND
NARRATORS

CHARACTERS REVEALED THROUGH LANGUAGE:

JUNO, AEOLUS, VENUS, AENEAS, DIDO, ILONEUS, IOPAS

HOW THE NARRATOR OF THE POEM EMERGES BY MAKING

SIMILES, BY STATING CAUSES AND PURPOSES

THE LANGUAGE OF LEGAL ARGUMENT

THE CENTRAL TECHNIQUE OF BOOK I AS KEYED TO THE SIMILE;
SIMILES MAKE POSSIBLE THE COMPARISON OF SOMETHING
PHYSICAL TO SOMETHING CONCEPTUAL; OF SOMETHING
REAL TO SOMETHING IMAGINARY; OF SOMETHING INSIDE THE
POEM TO SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE POEM; SIMILES SAY AS
MUCH ABOUT THE PERSON MAKING THE SIMILES AS THEY SAY
ABOUT THE THINGS WITHIN THE SIMILES

LANGUAGE IS A FORM OF ACTION IN BOOK I

TODAY: BOOKS II AND III

Books II and III are almost completely presented in Aeneas's voice; they represent his performances of his own personal history at Dido's court and before a present audience. They show us how the hero shapes his persona through personal narrative performance.

Conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant. / Inde toro pater Aeneas sic orsus ab alto.
(M II.1-3); these phrases will appear again at the end of Book III.

Book II: The Trojan Horse a story about rhetoric and reality, memory and action

At Troy, the appearance of the Horse is the occasion for competing rhetorical/legal arguments. Virgil uses speeches within speeches to deliberately remove the audience from the action and leave them with rhetoric.

Central question: would you bring the horse inside or leave it outside?

“The doubting crowd is split into two factions” (M 55)

Laoon's arguments: first, begin by making your audience feel better: e.g., are you all crazy? Do you actually believe the Greeks have sailed away? Greeks are crafty, that's in their nature, he says. So Laoon's technique is directed to enhancing the audience's sense of self and shared identity (M 56-70). I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts.

Sinon: a captured Greek who is brought before the Trojans and says the Horse is an offering to Minerva and should be brought inside. (M 81-281)

Sinon's speeches and his appearance:

M 81-106: Sinon is brought in; he appears to be a traitor to the Greeks; he says, "I have no place among the Danaans" (98-99)

M 107-148: Sinon's first speech; tells the story of his life; how he was betrayed and bullied by Ulysses; how he is upset that his friend has been betrayed; "With my words I stirred up bitter hatred" (134-135); but why go on, he says.

OH, go on, the Trojans implore (149-52)

He goes on (M153-203): He says that the Greeks wanted to abandon the war; that they were sick of it; they pray to the gods; it is decided that Sinon will be a human sacrifice. Sinon escapes; asks for mercy.

WELL: then Priam, says Aeneas, grants him mercy (205-7); Priam asks why the Greeks built the horse.

Sinon explains (217-75); THE BIG LIE: the Greeks built it as an offering to Minerva; the Trojans have to bring it in or destruction will come upon them.

"Such was the art of perjured Sinon, so insidious, we trusted what he told" (276-7)

SO: the Trojans bring the horse inside the walls of Troy (M 325 and following)

The Greek soldiers wait till nightfall; they exit the horse; open the gates and let
The hiding Greek soldiers in (351-70)

Aeneas is asleep; he dreams that the dead Trojan hero, Hector, comes to him
(373-5); Hector “wastes no words” and tells Aeneas to get out of Troy.

“The howls of war confound the city” (408)

“Insane I seize my weapons” (428)

The Trojans try to fight back but they lose: “Who has the words to tell that night’s
disaster . . . An ancient city falls” (488-90)

SUMMARY: AENEAS TELLS THE STORY OF THE TROJAN HORSE AS A STORY OF GREEK GUILF; SINON BECOMES A FIGURE OF GREEK-NESS FOR THE TROJANS: USING WORDS TO MANIPULATE OTHERS, TO LIE AND TO FABRICATE. SINON IS LIKE ULYSSES (ODYSSEUS). LACCOON LOSES OUT, AS HE IS A FIGURE OF TROJAN-NESS. AENEAS MUST BECOME A NEW KIND OF HERO – A KIND OF PROTO-ROMAN – IN HIS RESPONSE TO THE BURNING OF TROY. HE MOVES FROM ANGER AND MADNESS TO SANITY AND ACTION; HE MOVES FROM DREAM VISION AND HORROR TO CLARITY OF ACTION.

BUT: What is the consequence of his action?

Notice Aeneas's words throughout the story: ignorance (501); clamor (588); confusion (649); notice the actions of the old Priam in vain (680-7). Priam and the Trojans are brutally defeated; "This was the first time savage horror took me; I was astounded" (751-52)

Aeneas thinks of his wife and son. He is mad with vengeance: "carried off by my mad mind" (793); Venus then comes to him. "Why this madness?" she says (803); clear up your vision she says (M 817-820)

AND THEN THE BIG SIMILE: 843-56

The force of the simile: the un-manning of Troy; Aeneas must recover his sanity and his masculine identity; Aeneas's father, Anchises, will not leave his home; Aeneas must forcibly remove him.

But, look at 908-20: Aeneas girds on his sword; Creusa, his wife, holds him back.

NOTE: AT KEY MOMENTS, Aeneas's son, Ascanius, is also named Iulius, it's a way of signaling the dynastic inheritance of the Julian dynasty for whom Virgil is writing

AENEAS BECOMES A MYTHOLOGICAL HERO: 974-84 : HE IS LIKE HERCULES
CREUSA STAYS BEHIND . . . OR DOES HE LEAVE HER? 995-999

AT THE END OF BOOK II, CREUSA SEEMS TO REAPPEAR TO AENEAS AS A SHADE, A GHOST: “image far larger than the real” (1041-3).

And so, Aeneas sets himself up as an “exile.”

BOOK III tells the story of their wanderings throughout the Mediterranean. It is an Odyssey in miniature.

In the course of their wanderings they spend a few months in Buthrotum, where Helenus (who governs these former dominions of Achilles in Thrace) tells Aeneas a detailed prophecy about what lies ahead.

At Buthrotum (M 366-659); this is a complex scene, full of speeches and prophetic utterances. The important thing about Buthrotum is:

IT IS AENEAS AT ANOTHER COURT; THE SCENE REPRESENTS THE WAYS IN WHICH COURTLY RULERS BEHAVE; IT ILLUSTRATES PATTERNS OF HOSPITALITY; IT SHOWS HOW OTHER PEOPLE TELL STORIES; HELENUS IS A STORY-TELLER, IN THAT HE OFFERS A PROPHETIC ACCOUNT OF AENEAS’S FUTURE VOYAGE (484-606)

Helenus tells an Odyssey-like story, not so much as a memory but as a forecast: E.g. telling them about Scylla and Charybdis.

Aeneas has an Odyssey-like moment, but at one remove. When he and his men land on the island of the Cyclops, they meet NOT a Cyclops but a Greek survivor of the Cyclops: one of Odysseus's men.

This survivor is Achaemenides. He tells the story of the Cyclops all over again:
M 794-848.

What happens when the Cyclops actually appears before Aeneas and his men, then?

THEY RUN: "Alarmed, we rush our flight" (862)

At the end of Book III, after all these adventures, Anchises, Aeneas's father, dies
M 917.

The end of the story: end of Book III echoes the beginning of Book II.

Sic pater Aeneas intentis omnibus unus
Fata renarrabat divum cursusque docebat.
Conticuit tandem factoque hic fine quievit.

Translated in M: 928-31.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT DIDO'S COURT:

Dido has been listening; she is smitten; she is burning up with desire; she has fallen for Aeneas: Aeneas the story-teller.

Looking forward to Book IV: I have posted the Handout on the website this will be a guide to reading Book IV.

Reviewing Books II and III:

a story about stories

a set of performances in which words take on the power of deeds

an attempt to illustrate how Aeneas grows as a man, how he comes to embody the ideals of what will be Roman behavior.

BUT: there are some fissures and uncertainties:

How does the loss of Creusa reflect on Aeneas? Does he let her go?

Does he truly abandon her? Is Aeneas's destiny to leave women in favor of his "mission"?

Does the poem argue for an ideal of masculine identity that cannot abide partnership with a woman?