

Humanities 2

Lecture 4

Review from last class:

Books II and III of the Aeneid are Aeneas's performance at Dido's court

They enable the hero to tell his own story: to present ideals of heroic behavior keyed to language and rhetoric

The story of the Trojan horse becomes a story of rhetoric and argument:

a story about how people use language to sway opinion or action;

a story of how language can deceive

a story of national identity (Trojan-ness; Greek-ness) keyed to how language is used

the story transforms an earlier, Homeric narrative of craft (the making of the horse and the plan of deceit) into a Virgilian narrative of language

Aeneas's own story of his family: the loss of Creusa; the rescuing of the father and the son; the moral ambiguity of Aeneas at the close of Book II

Book III as a kind of "meta-Odyssey": that is, as a reworking of key themes episodes and activities of the Odyssey into another story about story-telling; the narrative of the past (Odysseus) becomes the story of the future (Helenus)

Language: echoes of Book II opening in Book III close; infandum -- unspeakable

TODAY: BOOK IV AND A LITTLE ON BOOK V

BOOK IV OF THE ANEID:

A love story

A drama of duty and betrayal

An essay in the nature of language, especially the language of love and rumor

One of the most famous pieces of Western Literature ever written.

Within decades of its composition, the Roman poet Ovid claimed it had more readers than any other part of the Aeneid

St. Augustine (as we will see later) loved it, hated, it, and stole from it

Approaches to the book:

as a drama: a book of speeches by characters, with the narrator himself emerging as a fully-formed commentator on the action

as a work of imagery: the highly-wrought language of desire: fire and burning, the use of literary devices to make ideas or concepts come alive

as a work of passion: the book is designed not only to describe the passions of its characters; it is designed to rouse the passion of the reader

Three sections:

the beginning of the affair (1-345)

the lovers' progressive alienation from each other (346-695)

the end – Aeneas leaves; Dido dies (696-end)

Dido: the imagery of the flame, of burning

dreams and dream imagery – compare with Aeneas's earlier visions

The debate between Dido and Anna (her sister), at M 1-73; how is this, again,

like a legal argument? compare Anna with the other

debaters/arguers/rhetoricians in the poem: Anna says,

“If you marry Aeneas, what a city and what a kingdom, sister, will you see!” (64-65)

This is important: the way in which political alliance and ambitions of power motivate desire.

Dido burning at M 74: anticipation of her end.

Dido's epithet: unhappy (infelix); look at the simile at 91-97

JUNO: she wants Aeneas to fail in his journey; Venus and Juno's discussion;

Juno's plan (152ff); Venus (called Cytherea here) seems to go along

Aeneas and Dido going hunting: another world of similes

Dido and Aeneas in the cave, seeking shelter from the rain: 212-28

NB: this is one of the most erotic passages in all of literature;
I'll read it in Latin (Latin text, lines 160-73): notice the uses of
alliteration; sonic effects; repetition; the displacing of physical
consummation on to a language of meteorological disruption.

RUMOR: the monstrous rumor (called Fama in Latin: personified here
not so much as a god but as a creature out of nightmare); Rumor as
a kind of anti-poet: "She sang of what was done and what was fiction (251-2);
Rumor contrasts with Virgil as a story-teller (and with Aeneas, too).

King Iarbas: North African king; he wants Dido (262); he is from "Maurusia": M
translates this as "moorish" but that's very misleading. The point about
Iarbas is that he is AFRICAN. Iarbas prays to Jupiter and complains about
Aeneas: says Aeneas has become effeminate (287-90)

KEY QUESTION HERE: HOW MUCH IS THIS SCENE ABOUT RACIAL IDENTITY
AND DIFFERENCE?

Jupiter hears; sends Mercury to get Aeneas out of there and back on his rightful way.

Mercury confronts Aeneas: see the whole scene 229-395; Mercury calls Aeneas
"uxorius" (Mandelbaum, translates "servant to a woman")

Aeneas gets ready to leave; Dido gets wind of this: "who can deceive a lover?" 396

Dido is angry: 410 and following: She calls him deceiver (Latin perfide)

She thinks they're really married.

How does Aeneas respond? "I have never entered into such agreements" (458-59). And what is Aeneas's primary excuse: "Stop your quarrel. It is not my own free will that leads to Italy."

REALLY???

Dido is "inflamed" (496): "No goddess was your mother, false Aeneas" (497); she questions his lineage. She swoons into the arms of her attendants (533 and following)

And now the narrator interjects: "What were your feelings, Dido, then?" (561) is this really "Virgil" talking? What is the force of this set of remarks? Whose side is Virgil on?

WELL: Dido speaks to her sister; Aeneas leaves; and she decides to kill herself. see lines 639-46

Dido's ruse: says to her sister: she will set up a ritual offering to local deities that will bring Aeneas back to her: but it's a lie: she's setting up her own pyre.

Dido now crazed she argues with herself (696-767)

Aeneas gets another visitation from Mercury: get going!

Dido: another speech

Dido: a crazed rant throughout the streets of her city (888-907)

And then: "I shall die unavenged, but I shall die"

Moriemur inultae
Sed moriemur (M909); Latin 659-60

NOTICE: HOW VIRGIL BREAKS HER SPEECH AT A LINE BREAK IN THE LATIN
THE METRICAL BREAK REINFORCES HER BREAK WITH LIFE
THIS IS POETRY!

And she tries, at the end, to raise herself up three times, but fails (948-54)

And Aeneas, on his way, can only see the flames of her pyre (Book V, 1-9)

From the Manuscript now in the Vatican Library, made in Rome about 400 AD



On the left, Aeneas leaves; on the right Dido kills herself in her bed

KEY POINTS ABOUT BOOK IV:

RHETORIC AND REALITY; DUTY AND DESIRE: THE STORY OF THE POWERFUL EROTIC LOVE OF DIDO AND AENEAS IS TOLD AS A STORY OF ARGUMENTS, A DISPLACEMENT OF PHYSICAL PASSION INTO VERBAL PASSION;

WE CONTINUE TO SEE THE MORALLY COMPROMISED AENEAS – OR DO WE? HOW IS THE EMOTIONAL NARRATIVE OF THE BOOK IN TANDEM OR IN TENSION WITH THE POLITICAL ALLEGORY: THAT IS, THE STORY OF A ROMAN MAN AND AN AFRICAN QUEEN: COMPARE ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

DIDO AS A POLITICAL RULER: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF FEMALE RULE? REMEMBER VENUS'S LINE: DUX FEMINA FACTI. PART OF THE ARGUMENT SEEMS TO BE POLITICAL AND CONTEMPORARY: THAT IS, DIDO/CLEOPATRA. PART OF THE ARGUMENT SEEMS TO BE POETICAL AND LITERARY: THAT IS, THE NATURE OF RULE IS THE NATURE OF RHETORICAL CONTROL; POLITICS IS A FORM OF THEATER; DIDO IS AN OVERTLY THEATRICAL FIGURE; VIRGIL'S EARLIEST AUDIENCE WOULD HAVE SEEN THE THEATRICAL AND DRAMATIC QUALITY IN THIS STORY; THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT FOR LATER READERS ESPECIALLY ST. AUGUSTINE.

BUT ALSO: WHAT IS THE PROPER RESPONSE TO POETRY: TO WEEP OR TO RUN; TO LET YOURSELF BE EMOTIONALLY SWAYED, OR NOT?

BOOK V:

KEY POINTS:

PERIOD OF NARRATIVE QUIET

THE EPIC GAMES

FOREGROUNDING OF AENEAS' COMPANIONS AND THE GROUP

THE ALLEGORY OF NARRATIVE ARTISTRY

THE BOAT RACE (144-377) AS A STORY ABOUT GAMING ITSELF:

ARE GAMES PART OF CIVILIZATION?

HOW ARE GAMES RULE-GOVERNED BEHAVIOR?

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PERFORMANCE IN SPORT?

COMPARE THIS SET OF NARRATIVES TO THE STORY OF THE TROJAN
HORSE IN BOOK II

BIG QUESTION: WHAT IS LITERATURE?

IS IT A TROJAN HORSE?

IS IT A SOCIAL RITUAL?

IS IT A SHARED EXPERIENCE OF UNDERSTANDING?

IS IT OK TO HAVE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO LITERATURE –
TO CRY, TO FEAR, TO LAUGH, TO BE ANGRY?