

Rome's Epic?

Aeneid 4-8

Lecture Outline

- **Virgil and Homer:** Honest admiration or outright copying?
- **Aeneid Book 6:** The idea of Rome
- **How do we read *The Aeneid*?:** Augustan propaganda or subtle critique?

***Aeneid* 1.1**

“I sing of arms and of a man”

“Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son
Achilles” (Hom. *Il.* 1.1, trans. Lattimore)

“Tell me, Muse, the story of that resourceful
man” (Hom. *Od.* 1.1, trans. Rieu)





Heracles (Hercules) in the underworld

(Photo: AG Hug)



(Image: www.unc.edu/awmc)

And here a multitude was rushing, swarming
shoreward, with men and mothers, bodies of
high-hearted heroes stripped of life, and boys
and unwed girls, and young men...
They stand; each pleads to be the first to cross
the stream; their hands reach out in longing for
the farther shore. But Charon, sullen boatman,
now takes these souls, now those; the rest he
leaves;
thrusting them back, he keeps them from the
beach.

(Verg. *Aen.* 6.402-405, 412-416)

... Queen, I swear by
the stars, the gods above, and any trust
that may be in this underearth, I was
unwilling when I had to leave your shores.
But those same orders of the gods that now
urge on my journey through the shadows,
through
abandoned, thorny lands and deepest night,
drove me by their decrees. And I could not
believe that with my going I should bring
so great a grief as this.

(Verg. *Aen.* 6.603-612)

But in the deep of a green valley, father
Anchises, lost in thought, was studying
the souls of all his sons to come – though
now
imprisoned, destined for the upper light.
And as it happened, he was telling over
the multitude of all his dear descendants,
his heroes' fates and fortunes, works and
ways.

(Verg. *Aen.* 6.898-904)

Now then turn your two eyes here, to look
upon
your Romans, your own people. Here is
Caesar

and all the line of Iulus that will come
beneath the mighty curve of heaven. This,
this is the man you heard so often promised

—

Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will
renew a golden age in Latium

(Verg. *Aen.* 6.1044-1050)

For other peoples will, I do not doubt,
still cast their bronze to breathe with softer
features,
or draw out of the marble living lines,
plead causes better, trace the ways of heaven
with wands and tell the rising constellations;
but yours will be the rulership of nations,
remember, Roman, these will be your arts:
to teach the ways of peace to those you
conquer,
to spare defeated peoples, tame the proud.

(Verg. *Aen.* 6.1129-1137)

...Primal Earth
and Juno, queen of marriages, together
now give the signal: lightning fires flash,
the upper air is witness to their mating,
and from the highest hilltops shout the nymphs.
That day was her first day of death and ruin.
For neither how things seem nor how they are
deemed

moves Dido now, and she no longer thinks
of furtive love. For Dido calls it marriage,
and with this name she covers up her fault.

(Verg. *Aen.* 4.219-228)

For there the Lord of Fire had wrought the
story
of Italy, the Romans' victories,
since he was not unskilled in prophecy
or one who cannot tell the times to come.

(Verg. *Aen.* 8.810-814)



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(Image taken from: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/SerDepts/vi/classicsexhibition/shieldofaeneas.html>)

...On his high stern Augustus Caesar
is leading the Italians to battle,
together with the senate and the people,
the household gods and Great Gods; his
bright brows
pour out a twin flame, and upon his head
his father's Julian star is glittering.

(Verg. *Aen.* 8.878-883)

...My sons do not
let such great wars be native to your minds,
or turn your force against your homeland's vitals:
and Caesar, be the first to show forbearance;
may you, who come from heaven's seed, born of
my blood, cast down the weapon from your hand!

(*Verg. Aen.* 6.1104-1109)

Aeneas marvels at his mother's gift,
the scenes on Vulcan's shield; and he
is glad
for all these images, though he does
not
know what they mean.

(Verg. *Aen.* 8.951-954)

...For as she died
a death that was not merited or fated,
but miserable and before her time

(Verg. *Aen.* 4.958-960)

Unhappy Dido, then the word I had
was true? That you were dead? That you
pursued
your final moment with the sword? Did I
bring only death to you?

(*Verg. Aen.* 6.600-603)

Political Events in Rome

- 70 BCE: First consulship of Pompey and Crassus
- 47 – 45 BCE: Civil War between Caesar and Pompey
- 44 BCE: Assassination of Julius Caesar
- 42 BCE: Battle of Philippi (Octavian and Antony defeat Brutus and Cassius)
- 31 BCE: Battle of Actium (Octavian defeats Antony)

Virgil's Life

- Virgil is born
- Virgil is 23
- Virgil is 26
- Virgil is 28
- Virgil is 39

but yours will be the rulership of nations,
remember, Roman, these will be your arts:
to teach the ways of peace to those you
conquer,

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(Verg. *Aen.* 6.1134-1137)

They make a desert, and call it
peace.

(*Tac. Agr. 30*)