

VIRGIL'S AENEID

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FL 9973

COMMENTARY AND
NARRATIVE IN ENGLISH
BY MOSES HADAS

THE
STORY
OF



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THE STORY OF VIRGIL'S AENEID

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THE STORY OF VIRGIL'S AENEID

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SIDE 1

No pagan work has been read so widely and uninterruptedly from its author's day to our own as has Virgil's Aeneid, and none is so truly a bridge between classical paganism and Christian Europe. The classical end of the bridge is marked by similarities to Homer, from whom Virgil took not only the techniques which had become canonical for epic—hexameter verse, duodecimal division of books, divine machinery, extended similes—but also a long series of individual episodes. The organization, indeed, is more sophisticated than Homer's. Each episode grows naturally out of what precedes (which is not always the case in Homer), and the whole is shaped into a single unified arch from which no considerable piece may be removed.

But to see in Virgil merely a sophisticated refinement of Homer is to miss his essential quality and essential purpose. Reduced to its simplest terms, the story of the Aeneid can be told this way: After a great national humiliation, a divinely appointed hero leads a chosen people, through much travail, to a promised land. During his journey he repeatedly receives divine directions for carrying his mission out and a solemn assurance that his people will bring peace and civilization to all the world. So considered, the Aeneid is a religious poem; its object is to glorify the sanctity and majesty of Rome and to impress upon Romans the high responsibilities of their divine mission. In another respect, too, Virgil is much nearer to Christianity than to the Homeric ideals. He has a profound sympathy for suffering and sorrow, and a conviction that it is through suffering that man reaches the depths of religious experience. It is through sacrifice and suffering that ultimate triumph is to be achieved.

The apocalyptic quality of the Aeneid is enhanced by a remarkable and skillful use of the technique of the actual apocalypses which were written and circulated in the intertestamentary period. The reader is placed in the twelfth century B. C., and prophecies from that vantage point which the reader knows to have been fulfilled create credit for other prophecies which refer to the actual future. Even the sophisticated reader is astonished at Dido's clairvoyance in the matter of the Punic Wars (though he knows well enough that these wars were fought centuries before Virgil wrote), and so ready to believe Virgil's other prophecies referring to the future of Rome's destiny must be equally true. Another analogy to the religious literature of the East is the position of Aeneas himself as a national symbol, chosen as the instrument of destiny and set apart from ordinary humanity. Achilles and Odysseus may be more admirable, from a literary point of view, because they are more nearly free agents and represent poetic truth of a more universal validity. Aeneas represents a specifically Roman ideal, disciplined and institutionalized in consonance with the spirit of the Augustan Age. Through Silvius he is the ancestor of the Alban kings and of Romulus; through Iulus (though the etymology is baseless), of the Julian gens. Not only as the founder of these two great lines, but as the parent of the Roman people, (who are sometimes called Aeneadae (children of Aeneas): Aeneid 8.648), Aeneas must have within him

all the institutionalized virtues which his descendants inherit.

This preoccupation with the spiritual explains much of the specific quality which distinguishes the Aeneid from other classical poetry, and especially from Virgil's immediate Homeric models. Not only is there gentleness and boundless compassion for the "Tacrinae rerum," the untranslatable but eloquent "tears of things," but there is a studied suggestiveness and allusiveness in the language. Mark Van Doren's eloquent essay on the Aeneid puts the matter well:

A political subject—in this case the great role of Rome as consolidator and pacifier of world society, and more particularly the great place of Augustus at the goal of so much progress—might seem to have demanded a forthright, confident, and masculine narrative, clearly ordered and precisely phrased. Instead of that we get in the Aeneid indirect lighting and misty effects. Its author's favorite adjectives are "tenuis" and "inanis" (thin-pale). There is continual resort to the undefined, to the unspeakable, and even to the unimaginable. The scenes are invariably "tangled" or "shadowy." The prevailing hue is grey, and the time when the poet is most at home is twilight or nightfall, when things have become difficult to see in their hard, natural outlines. The result, given Virgil's genius, is a number of passages washed over with the loveliest tones the minor lyre has ever commanded.

In his opening lines Virgil declares his purpose and invokes his Muse—

"Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam, fato profugus, Laviniae venit
Litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto
Vi superum, saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram,
Multa quoque et bello passus, dum conderet urbem
Inferretque deos Latio, genus unde Latinum
Albanique patres atque altae moenia Romae.

Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso
Quidve dolens, regina deum tot volvere casus
Insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores
Impulerit. Tantaene animis caelestibus irae?"

Arms and the man I sing who earliest came
Fate-bound for refuge from the coasts of Troy
To Italy, and her Lavinian shore.
Much tossed about was he alike by land
And on the deep, by violence of gods,
Through savage Juno's unrelenting wrath,
And many hurts endured in war beside,
Till he could found a city, and bring in
His gods to Latium, whence the Latin race,
And Alban sires and walls of lofty Rome.

O Muse, tell o'er the causes now for me,
How wronged in deity, or how chagrined,
The queen of gods compelled a man renowned
For piety such round of woes to bear,
So many mighty toils to undertake.
In heavenly breasts, do such fierce passions dwell?
1.1-11

At once Virgil throws us into the midst of his story—"in medias res," as Horace prescribed. Its beginning we shall learn later in a flashback; at once we are hurled into a violent storm, which is as symbolic as it is spectacular. The scene is the sea off Carthage.

Juno, who had favored the Greeks and is angered because the hated Trojans are reaching their destination, asks Aeolus, master of the winds, to sink Aeneas' ships. Aeolus does his worst—

He smote the hollow mountain side
With spear down-pointed, and the winds rush forth,
Where free their passage, as in close array,
And in a whirlwind blow through the lands,
Brood o'er the sea at once, and side by side
East wind and South wind stir it from its depths,
And Africus, the wind of many squalls,
And roll tremendous billows to the shore.
Then speedily goes up the cry of men,
And creaking of the cordage; suddenly
Clouds from the eyes of Teucrians snatch away
Their sight of heaven and daylight; o'er the sea
Black darkness broods: it thunders pole to pole
And aether sparkles with repeated flash,
And all things to the men bode instant death.
At once Aeneas' limbs are numbed with cold;
He groans, and, stretching starward both his palms
Thus cries aloud: "O thrice and four times blest,
Whose happy lot before your fathers' eyes,
Beneath Troy's lofty walls to meet your death!"

E'en midst such reckless words, the whistling blast
Of Aquilo strikes full upon the sail,
And dashes high the billows to the stars.
The oars break short, then turns aside the prow,
And gives the vessel broad-side to the waves;
A mountain-steep of waters in their wake
Towers heaped above them. On the billow's crest
These hang suspended, while the yawning gulf
To these lays bare the land amidst the waves;
The boiling tide runs seething with the sand.
Three ships has Notus caught away, and whirled
On hidden rocks;
Three now does Eurus thrust from off the main
On shallows and on quicksands, rueful sight,
And dash them on the shoals, and ring them round
With bank of sand: one ship that had on board
Faithful Orontes and his Lycian men,
Before their leader's eyes, a mighty sea
Towering above it, smote upon the stern;
Then forth was hurled, and prone, head foremost rolled
Her helmsman; thrice then in that very spot
The billow whirled her round, and in its wave
The whirlpool swift devoured her. There appear
Men swimming in the waters' wide expanse,
One here, one there, the arms of men, and planks,
And Trojan treasure strewn upon the waves.

1.81-119

Neptune is astonished at the turmoil in his element and restores calm—

Quicker than the word, he allayed
The swollen waves, and chased the gathered clouds,
And brought the sunshine back. Cymothoe
And with her Triton, shouldering, thrust the ships
From off the jagged rock, while he himself
Lightens their weight with trident, and lays bare
The quicksands vast, and makes the waters still,
And glides with light wheel o'er the tops of waves.
And as, oft-times when riot has arisen
Amongst a thronging populace, and minds
Of baser folk wax wroth, and instantly
Flies torch and stone, for fury findeth arms,
Then should they chance to look upon a man
By goodness and by service dignified,
They hush, and stand around with ears attent;
He sways their hearts with words, and calms their
breasts.

So stills at once all crashing of the main,
When forth the father looks across the sea,
And borne on cloudless sky directs his steeds,
And flying gives his easy car the rein.

1.142-156

Notice that the first extended simile in the poem refers to a typically Roman political scene. Aeneas reaches a haven with seven of his ships, and the crews kindle a fire and prepare a meal. Aeneas offers encouragement—

"O, Comrades mine,
For we were not unversed in ills before,
O ye that have still weightier trials borne,
These too shall the gods end. Ye have come nigh
Mad Scylla and her deep resounding rocks,
And e'en have proven the Cyclopean crags,
Call courage back, banish gloomy fear,
Perchance ye yet in time to come may joy
As ye remember this. Through various haps
And many risks to Latium on we press,
Where fates disclose us undisturbed abodes;
There heaven allows Troy's realm to rise again:
Bear up, and keep yourselves for better days."

'Revocate animos, maestumque timorem
Mittite; forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit...
Durate, et vosmet rebus servate secundis."

1.198-207

Venus, solicitous for her suffering son, implores Jupiter's protection for him. He consoles her and foretells the destiny of the Romans, who shall be "rerum dominos, gentemque togatam."

Smiling on her, the sire of men and gods,
With that same look with which he turns to calm
The sky and tempest, kissed his daughter's lips;
Thus he then: "Cytherea, spare thy fear,
Unchanged for thee thy children's fates abide:
Lavinium's city and its battlements,
My promise to thee, thou shalt yet behold,
And bear exalted to the stars of heaven
High-souled Aeneas, for no fresh resolve
Hath changed my will. He—for I now will tell,
Since preys upon thee this solicitude,
And will fate's secrets further still unroll—
Shall wage for thee huge war in Italy,
Beat down her haughty peoples, and create
Laws of the land and dwellings for his men.
The boy Ascanius, he that bears
The name Iulus now,
Shall with his rule complete, month rolled on month,
Thrice ten great circling years
The scepters from Lavinium's settlement
And fortify the long white town amain.
Here now for full three hundred years
The line of Hector shall the sovereignty maintain
Till Iliad, priestess-queen, shall at one birth
Bring Mars a double offspring. From that time
Rejoicing in a she-wolf's tawny hide,
His foster-mother's, Romulus shall take
The race in hand, and found the walls of Mars,
And call the people Romans from his name.
To these do I nor bound nor period set,
For I have given them empire without end.
Nay cruel Juno who now keeps astir
The sea, and earth, and heaven in her alarm,
Shall turn to better counsels, and with me
Watch o'er the Romans, lords of all the world,
The togaed race. So hath it pleased my will.
An age shall come with gliding lustrums when
Assaracus' proud line shall subjugate
Phthia and famed Mycenae, and be lords
O'er conquered Argos. Caesar shall be born,
Trojan of lofty ancestry, to bound
His sway by Ocean, by the stars his fame,
Julius, a name from great Iulus drawn.
Him with light heart thou'lt welcome to the sky
Laden with eastern spoils in days to come;
He too shall be invoked with prayers, and then,
Wars laid aside, fierce ages shall grow mild;
Hoar Faith and Vesta then, Quirinus too
Joined with his brother, shall assign them laws;

Then shall the cruel gates of war be closed
With sturdy bolts of iron."

1.254-294

Venus herself, attired as a huntress, accosts Aeneas as he is exploring the country. In response to his inquiry she tells him that the country is ruled by Dido, a Tyrian princess whose husband, Sychaeus, had been murdered by her wicked brother, and who had fled, with such money and friends as she could collect, to the site of Carthage, where she was now building a great city. In return Aeneas briefly tells his own sad story, and receives the goddess' encouragement—

"Who'er thou art, beloved of gods, I ween,
Thou drawest breath of life, since thou art come
Safe to this Tyrian town. Go thou but on,
And hie thee to the palace of the queen,
For of thy friends' returning, and thy fleet
Brought back again and by veered Aquilos
Driven into safety do I bring thee news;
Thy ships and youth
Are either safe in harbour, or full sail
Making the entrance. Only go thou on,
And where the pathway leads thee, point thy steps."

"Perge modo, et, qua te ducit via, dirige gressum."
1.387-401

Themselves unseen, Aeneas and his faithful Achates observe the scene in Carthage. A magnificent temple is decorated with episodes from the Trojan war: Dido knows about Aeneas, then, just as Aeneas now knows about Dido. Presently she herself is seen, majestically administering the affairs of the new city, when suddenly the captains of the ships Aeneas had presumed lost appear to ask her protection. She replies—

"Loose from your heart your fear, ye men of Troy,
And lay your cares aside. Harsh circumstance
And newness of my realm constrain me now
To take these pains, and far and wide to set
Watch o'er my borders. Who can fail to know
The race of the Aeneadae, Troy's town
Who knoweth not? Its deeds and doughty men,
And all the kindlings of that mighty war?
We Carthaginians bear not breasts so dull,
Nor does Sol yoke his steeds so far away
From this our Tyrian town. If you should choose
Either the great West land and Saturn's fields,
Or boundaries of Eryx and your king,
Acestes, I will speed you safely hence
With furtherance, and aid you of my store.
Or, would you settle in these realms with me
On equal terms? the town I build is yours;
Draw up your ships; Trojan and man of Tyre
Shall at my hands be treated both alike.
And well I would your king himself were here,
Aeneas, driven by that same southern blast.
Along my shores will I indeed send forth
Trustworthy men and give command to search
The farthest bounds of Libya, if he,
Shipwrecked, be roaming in its woods or towns."

1.562-578

The cloud disperses and Aeneas himself appears:
"I whom you seek am here before you, Aeneas of Troy."
Dido is astonished and offers Aeneas a respectful and cordial welcome. "Nec ignara mali miseris succerrere disco": "Being acquainted with grief, I am learning to help the unlucky."

Venus fears lest Juno use her protégée Dido to harm Aeneas, and so arranges that Aeneas' son Ascanius be wafted away and replaced by disguised Cupid, who will thus have an opportunity to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas. At a lavish banquet Dido is indeed strongly attracted to Aeneas: as she fondles the pretended Ascanius, the real Cupid does his work.

At the conclusion of the feasting (and of the first book) Dido begs Aeneas to tell the story of his wanderings; the opening lines of the second book give Aeneas' consent—

"Past telling of,
O queen, the grief thou biddest me recall,
How Danaans o'erthrew the power of Troy
And realm we mourn; sore deeds myself beheld,
And bare chief part in them. What warrior
Of Myrmidons, or Dolopes, or stern
Ulysses, could when telling such a tale
Hold back from tears? And now dew-laden night
Is rushing down the sky, and setting stars
Beguile to slumber. But, if such desire
Be thine to acquaint thee with our miseries,
And briefly learn of Troy's last agony,
Though the mind shudders, as it calls it back,
And did from grief recoil, I will begin."

2.3-13

Aeneas' vivid narrative continues through books two and three and includes the story of the Trojan horse, the sack of Troy, Aeneas' escape, with the loss of his wife Creusa, his landing at several intermediate points, where he encounters horrors, such as the foul Harpies or the Cyclops Polyphemus, or receives divine direction and encouragement. At Drepanum in western Sicily, the last stop before the storm, his father, Anchises, died.

From the beginning of Book IV we can see how Aeneas' account has affected Dido. Aeneas, having finished, rested—

Not so the Queen; she all the while had felt
Love's grievous hurt, and feeds upon her veins
Her wound, and is by secret fire devoured.
Oft to her mind the valour of the man,
And oft the glory of his race recurs;
His every look fast in her memory clings,
The words he spoke as well, and love's distress
Allows not to her limbs the calm of rest.

The after-dawn was traversing the lands
With Phoebus' torch, and from the sky he chased
Moist shade away, when thus—her mind astray—
She addressed her sister, one with her in heart:
"O Anna, sister! what dream-fancies these
That hold me in the terror of suspense?
Who this new guest that to our settlements
Has made his way? How noble is his mien!
How stout of heart and arms! Full faith have I,
Nor groundless my assurance, that of gods
The offspring born is he. Fear is the sign
Of baseborn souls, and ah! how tossed by fate.
What tale of wars deep drained to us he told!
Were't not that fixed and changeless in my mind
Sat the resolve, that ne'er would I consent
In marriage chain to join with any man,
Since my first love did mock by death's deceit,
Were I not heart-sick of the nuptial couch
And nuptial torch, perchance I might have been
To this one weakness able to succumb.
Anna, for I will own, since destiny
Befell Sychaeus, my unhappy lord,
And since our gods were stained by brother's blood,
'Tis he alone did e'er my feelings sway,
And set my mind's resolve a-tottering.
Traces of love long past I recognize.
But I could even wish the earth to yawn
And take me in, or the Almighty Sire
To hurl me with his lightning to the shades,
Pale shades of Erebus, and night profound,
Ere, Modesty, I do thee violence,
Or break thy laws. He who in wedlock first
Joined me to him, he bore my true love off;
Let him then hold and keep it in his tomb."
She spake, and filled her lap with gushing tears.

4.1-30

Anna declares that loyalty to her murdered husband is futile, points out that Dido is surrounded by enemies from whom marriage with Aeneas would protect her, and suggests devices for delaying his departure. Dido is nearly beside herself, and in concern for her, Juno connives with Venus to have Dido and Aeneas marry. The two will be thrown together on a hunt, when a storm will drive them to shelter in the same cave. Here is the hunt and its consequences—

Dawn rose the while and left Oceanus,
 And when the day-star showed, the chosen youths
 Sally from out the gates; their subtle nets,
 Their snares, their broad-point hunting spears in hand;
 And forth Massilian horsemen and the pack
 Of hounds keen-scented rush. Beside her gates
 The Carthaginian nobles wait their queen,
 In chamber lingering, and her charger stands
 Bedecked with purple and with gold, and champs—
 High-mettled that he is—his foaming bit.
 At length she issues, a great throng around,
 Clad in Sidonian cloak, with purple fringe;
 Her quiver wrought of gold, her tresses tied
 With knot of golden braid, a golden clasp
 Binds up her purple robe. There join th'array
 His Phrygian comrades, glad Iulus too;
 Himself, Aeneas, fairest of them all,
 Enters her company, and joins the bands.
 No sooner have they reached the lofty heights
 And pathless haunts of beasts than lo! wild goats
 Dislodged from tops of crags come rushing down
 The ridges; and elsewhere on open plains
 Are herds of stags careering, and in flight
 They mass their dusty droves and leave the hills.
 Meanwhile the heavens begin to be disturbed
 With rumbling loud, then mingled rain and hail;
 And Tyrian suite dispersed, and Trojan youth,
 And Venus' Dardan grandson, in affright,
 Seek various shelter all among the fields;
 Down from the mountains rush the torrent streams.
 The Trojan chief and Dido wend their way
 To the same cave. Then primal Goddess Earth,
 And Juno, marriage-dame, give forth a sign
 The fires flash out and Aether is aware
 Of their love-union, and on mountain top
 The nymphs yell forth their cries of joy. That day,
 First was the cause of death to her, and first
 The cause of ills; for Dido is not moved
 By look of what she does or what men say,
 Nor love in secret does she now desire;
 She calls it wedlock, and she cloaks her fault
 Beneath the name.

Through Libya's great towns
 Rumour goes forth at once, Rumour than whom
 No other speedier evil thing exists;
 She thrives by rapid movement, and acquires
 Strength as she goes; small at the first from fear,
 She presently uplifts herself aloft,
 And stalks upon the ground and hides her head
 Among the clouds. Swift on her feet
 And easy-gliding wings, a beast to dread,
 Of mighty size, who, many as there be
 Plumes on her body, marvel to be told,
 Bears just so many watchful eyes beneath,
 So many tongues, so many babbling mouths,
 And just so many ears she pricks to hear.
 Amid the sky, and through the shade of earth,
 She flies o' nights with noise, nor droops her eyes
 In pleasant slumber. In the day she sits
 Either upon the top of some tall roof,
 Or on the lofty towers to keep her watch,
 And through great cities consternation spreads,
 And clings as stoutly to the false and base,
 As when she tells of truth. She then with glee
 Began a-filling with her various tales
 The minds of people, and declared alike
 The things that had, and things that had not been!
 "That Trojan-born Aeneas has arrived,
 Whom beauteous Dido is content to take

As husband; and now in dalliance
 They spend the winter long in company,
 Unmindful of their realms and captivated
 By base amours." Into the mouths of men
 The shameless goddess spreads these tales abroad,
 And straight to King Iarbas turns her course,
 And with her words inflames his soul and piles
 His angry passions high.

4.129-197

Iarbas was a rejected suitor of Dido's, and in his indignation he complains to Jupiter, who sends Mercury to bid Aeneas depart from Carthage. Here is Mercury's reproach to Aeneas—

"Busy art thou, now,
 Planting the walls of lofty Carthage firm,
 And building a fine town to please a wife?
 Thy realms and fortunes, ah! thou hast forgot;
 The ruler of the gods, who by his nod
 Sways heaven and earth at will, has sent me down
 To thee from bright Olympus; He, himself,
 Through the swift air bade me this message bring:
 What is your purpose? and with what intent
 Waste you your idle hours in Libyan lands?
 If, by high fortune's glamour all unmoved
 You care not hard to toil for your own fame,
 Look on Ascanius' rising star, and hopes
 Your heir Iulus brings you, unto whom
 Italian realm and Roman land are due."

4.265-276

SIDE 2

Aeneas is stunned and prepares to leave; he is hesitant about breaking the news to Dido, but she senses the situation and upbraids him—

But the Queen
 Foreknew their wiles—who can a lover cheat?
 And their intended movements grasped at once,
 For e'en in safety feared she everything.
 That same accursed Rumour then to her
 Bore word amid her frenzy that the fleet
 Was being armed, and their departure planned.
 Sense-reft, she rages, and infuriate
 Through all the city plays the Bacchanal.
 At length she first accosts
 Aeneas in these words: "Perfidious man,
 Didst thou e'en hope to gloze so great a wrong,
 From my land then without word depart?
 Doth not my love, nor thy once plighted hand,
 Nor Dido doomed a cruel death to die,
 Cause thee to stay? Nay dost thou fit thy fleet
 In winter time, and hasten o'er the deep,
 E'en while the North-winds blow—so hard thy heart?
 What? If thou wert not seeking foreign fields,
 And homes untried, and ancient Troy remained,
 Would thy fleet sail across the stormy sea
 To Troy herself? Dost thou then fly from me?
 I pray thee by these tears and thy right hand—
 Since I myself have left me in my woe
 Naught now beside—by our love-union made
 And by the rites of Hymen we began,
 If at thy hands I any good deserved,
 Or aught I had to give was dear to thee,
 Pity my tottering house, and lay aside,
 If yet is room for prayers, that thought, I pray.
 'Tis for thy sake the Libyan nations bear
 Ill-will to me, Numidia's sovereigns too,
 Tyrians are wroth; for thee as well were lost
 Honour, and the earlier fame, by which alone
 I was attaining access to the stars.
 A dying woman to whose hands dost thou
 Leave me behind, my guest? For this is all
 That of the name of husband still remains.
 If only, ere thy flight,
 Some offspring I had at thy hand received,
 If but some little Aeneas were at play

Within my hall, who—spite of all—in face
Might bring thee back, then would I not indeed
Seem altogether snared and desolate."

4.296-330

Aeneas remains firm, explaining that he must
go to Italy in justice to Ascanius and in obedience to his
divine mission—

He, by Jove's monition kept
His eyes unmoved, and struggled to control
The emotion in his heart. At length he made
Brief answer thus: "Ne'er, Queen, will I deny
That thou hast well deserved in all the things—
And they are full many—that thou canst recount;
Nor shall Elissa's memory bring to me
One thought unkindly, not so long as I
Am mindful of myself, while breath controls
These limbs. Now, as the circumstance allows,
I'll briefly speak. No thought had I by stealth
To hide this flight—conceive not such a thing—
Nor ever did I claim a bridegroom's torch,
Nor come to such a compact.

On great Italy,

On Italy the Lycian oracles,
Have bidden me lay hold. Here lies my heart,
This is my fatherland. If Carthage-towers,
And the beholding of thy Libyan town,
Hold thy Phoenician blood within their spell,
Why grudgest thou, that in Ausonian land
Trojans should settle? Unto us as well
Leave has been given to seek for realms abroad.
So oft as night wraps earth in moistening shade,
So oft as fiery constellations rise,
My sire Anchises' phantom in my dreams
Warns me, and by his troubled mien affrights;
Present to me the boy Ascanius,
And wrong he suffers whom I hold so dear,
Whom of his western realms, and of the fields
Fates give him, I defraud. And 'twas but now
The gods' interpreter by Jove himself
Sent down—I call to witness both the gods—
Bare down his mandate through the speedy air;
My very self in the clear light I saw
The god, as he was entering thy walls,
And with these ears drank in his utterance.
Cease to inflame us both with thy complaints;
Not of my choice I follow Italy."

4.331-361

Now Dido's appeal turns to hatred and curses;
Aeneas resolutely proceeds with his preparations—

While thus he spake she eyed him long askance,
Rolling her eyes each way, and scanned him o'er
With silent gaze, and thus addresses him
With kindled fury: "Thou perfidious wretch!
No goddess hadst thou for a mother, nor
Was Dardanus the founder of thy race,
But Caucasus rough-strewn with flinty crags
Did thee beget, and unto thee gave suck
Hyrceanian tigresses. For, why should I
Hide what I feel? or for what greater wrongs
Reserve myself? As he beheld me weep,
Did sigh escape him? Did his eye relent?
From pity did he weep? or did he feel
Compassion for a lover?
Now, now 'tis sure,
Not mightiest Juno, not Saturnian Sire
Look on these things with eye to what is right.
True faith is nowhere. Cast upon my shore,
I rescued him in need and, sense-bereft,
In part of my own realm made him a place,
Recovered his lost fleet, his friends from death.
First Phoebus tells my doom, then Lycian fates,
And heaven's interpreter, from Jove himself,
Brings me their gruesome orders through the air.
Aye, that forsooth is work for gods to do,
That anxious thought disturbs them in their rest.

Nor hold I thee, nor word of thine refute;
Go, follow Italy as winds may blow.
Seek kingdoms o'er the waves. I hope indeed
Amid the rocks thou'lt drink thy fill of pains,
If righteous gods have any might at all,
And that thou oft wilt call on Dido's name.
Absent I'll track thee with dark fires, and, when
Chill death has drawn my limbs from soul apart,
A ghost will I be with thee everywhere.
O wicked one,

Hear it I shall, and in the depths of shades
This news will come to me." She with these words
Broke off amid her speech, and sick at heart
Fled from the open day, and from his gaze
She turned her and withdrew, and left him there
Long pausing in dismay and looking long
For further chance to speak. Her waiting maids
Uplift her in their arms, and carry back
Her fainting limbs within her marble room,
And on her pillows lay her down to rest.

But good Aeneas, though he longed to soothe
Sorrow by his consoling, and with words
Turn from its course her grief, with many sighs,
And though heart failed him from his depth of love,
Still he fulfills the mandate of the gods,
And to his fleet repairs. Then sooth Troy's sons
Work with a will, and all along the shores
Launch their tall ships, the well-caulked keels afloat,
And from the forest carry leafy boughs
And oars untrimmed, in eagerness for flight.
You may discern them moving from their homes
And rushing from all quarters of the town.

4.362-401

Now, her pride crushed, Dido sends Anna to beg
Aeneas for a mere respite; Aeneas remains obdurate—

"Why should he refuse
To his stern ears admission to my words?
Oh whither is he rushing? Let him grant
To his unhappy lover this last boon;
Let him but wait an easy time for flight
And favouring winds. I am not pleading now
Our former marriage tie, which he betrayed,
Nor that his beautiful Latium he should miss,
And give his kingdom up; I crave from him
The empty gift of time, a respiting
And interval to let my madness run,
Till my hard fate may school me how to grieve
Submissively. This favour I entreat—
'Twill be the last of all—have pity on
Thy sister—which when thou hast granted me,
I'll pay it back abundantly, in death."

Thus she kept pleading, and such wailings sore
Her sister in deep anguish bare to him,
And bare again. But wailings moved him not
Nor heeds he aught her words—as if to yield.
The fates withstand her, and the god has stopped
The hero's ears that he may hear unmoved,
And, as when Alpine blasts of Boreas
Vie one against another to uproot
With sudden gusts, from this side then from that,
A sturdy oak with strength of years endowed;
It creaks aloud, and when its trunk has borne
Rude battering, thick on the ground its leaves
Are strewn in heaps; itself to rock clings firm,
And high as to heaven's airs it rears its head,
So deep it thrusts its root in Tartarus.
E'en so by her with unremitting prayers
The hero is assailed on every side,
And feels the pangs right through his mighty breast.
His purpose stands unshaken; all in vain
Her tears are rolling down.

4.428-449

Dido can only pray for death. She persuades
Anna to help her build a funeral pyre, pretending that
certain magic rites will free her of love for Aeneas.
She performs a weird ritual, but at night gives vent to
her despair in a soliloquy—

'Twas night, and weary forms in all the lands
 Their placid slumber drew; woods and rough waves
 Had lulled to rest, when stars are gliding on
 In mid-career, when every field is still,
 Flocks and gay birds, both those that far around
 Dwell by the liquid meres, and with them those
 In thorny thicket lands, laid down in sleep,
 In silence of the night their troubles soothe,
 And hearts that of their labours lose the thought.
 Not so the sad Phoenissa nor was she
 To slumber e'er relaxed, nor took to her
 In eyelid or in breast the balm of night;
 Her anguish deepens, welling up anew
 Her passion riots, and on surging tide
 Of wrath she wavers. So she thus begins
 And thus within her heart revolves it all!
 "Nay, rather die,
 As thy dessert has been, and with thy sword
 Turn grief aside. Thou, by my tears o'ercome,
 Thou, Sister, first didst load me with these ills
 In my mad love, and cast me to my foe.
 Why might I not unwedded pass my life,
 As do the beasts at large, without reproach,
 Nor feel the touch of sorrows such as these?
 My troth has not been kept, the promise made
 To the ashes of Sychaeus!"

4.522-552

Her broken promise to her husband is indeed the cause of her tragedy. Aeneas, already on shipboard, is warned by Mercury not to tarry: "Heia, age, rumpe moras. Varium et mutabile semper femina." "Up and away then! No more lingering! Woman is ever a fickle and changing thing." Aeneas cuts the hawser with his sword, and at dawn Dido sees the fleet out to sea. She bewails the lost opportunity for destroying the Trojans before her death, invokes bitter curses upon them, and appeals to a future avenger, who is of course Hannibal—

"O Sun, whose flames all works of earth reveal,
 And thou, O Juno, messenger of these
 My woes and cognizant, and Hecate
 Whose name is howled at cross-ways in the night
 Throughout the towns, and Furies that avenge,
 And gods of dying Dido, hear ye this,
 And turn your heavenly power as we deserve
 Toward our ills, and listen to our prayers.
 If needs his impious head must touch the port,
 And struggle to the land, and so the fates
 Of Jove demand, and this his fixed decree;
 Still, sorely tried in war, and by the arms
 Of a brave people exiled from his lands,
 Torn from Iulus' clasp, let him cry help,
 And see his followers' undeserved deaths;
 Nor, when to compact of disastrous peace
 Himself he has surrendered, let him reap
 Joy of his realm, or of the life he craved;
 But let him fall before his day, and lie
 Out on mid-sand unburied. These my prayers,
 These the last words that with my blood I pour.
 Then you, O Tyrians, with your hatred ply
 The stock and all the race that is to be.
 These to mine ashes send for funeral gifts.
 Love 'twixt the peoples, treaties be there none.
 Some vengeance-bearer from my bones arise!
 That thou those Dardan settlers may'st pursue
 With torch and sword—now—in the days to come—
 Or whensoever might shall lend its aid,
 Shore against shore, and billows against waves,
 Arms against arms, in solemn curse I pray;
 And let the men and let their grandsons fight."

4.607-629

She mounts the pyre, makes her farewells, and stabs herself. Anna's attempts to stanch the wounds are vain, and Juno sends Iris down to release Dido's struggling spirit.

After the intensity of Book IV, Book V offers

relaxation. Here the Trojans return to Drepanum and commemorate the anniversary of Anchises' death by a series of games. Juno instigates the travel-worn women to set the ships on fire, which is providentially extinguished by rain; Aeneas does leave the weaker part of his company behind. The ghost of Anchises instructs Aeneas to visit him in the Elysian Fields, and Venus procures Neptune's promise that the fleet will have a safe voyage to Italy.

Book VI brings Aeneas to Italy. With the aid of the Sibyl, Aeneas finds the Golden Bough and makes his way to the underworld. He encounters first the shapes of Anxiety and Agony and the like, then a group of monsters like the Centaurs and Chimaeras, and then the river Cocytus, where a crowd of ghosts is waiting to be ferried over. Charon takes Aeneas across to hell proper, and the Sibyl lulls the three-headed dog Cerberus to sleep with a honied cake. He goes through the parts assigned to those who died in infancy, to those who were unjustly condemned, to those who took their own lives, and to those who died for love. Here he recognizes Dido—

Amidst of these Phoenicians Dido roamed,
 Fresh from her wound, in that far spreading wood:
 And soon as by her stood the Trojan chief
 And knew her darkling form amid the shade—
 E'en as one sees, or fancies he has seen,
 The moon uprising when the month is young,
 Between the clouds—he let his tears flow down
 And with a fond affection spake to her;
 "Unhappy Dido, true then came to me
 The tale that thou hadst quenched thy life, and sought
 With sword the end of things. Alas! was I
 Occasion of thy death? By stars I swear,
 By gods above, and if beneath earth's depths
 Be any bond of faith, against my will,
 It was, O queen, that I forsook thy shores.
 But the commands of gods which force me now
 To fare amidst these shades, through spots o'ergrown
 With mouldiness, and through the night profound,
 By their injunctions drove me; nor could I
 Deem that departing I was bringing thee
 Such bitter grief as this. Stay, from my sight
 Withdraw thee not. Whom art thou fleeing from?
 This the last time fate wills I speak to thee."
 With such appeal Aeneas sought to soothe
 Her soul inflamed, that viewed him all askance,
 And tears within him rose. She turned away
 And held her gaze fast fixed upon the ground,
 Nor were her features by his words begun
 More moved, than if a stern flint rock stood there,
 Or crag of mount Marpesus: then at last
 She snatched herself away, and backward fled
 Unfriendly-wise into the shady grove,
 Where her first husband to her cares responds,
 And where Sychaeus gives her love for love.

6.450-474

Next is the abode of famous warriors, where the Greek ghosts are terrified of Aeneas, and the Trojans speak of Troy's last days. Where the roads to Tartarus and Elysium divide, they take the latter, the Sibyl meanwhile describing to Aeneas the horrible punishments of the notorious malefactors in Tartarus. They deposit the Golden Bough at the palace of Proserpina and enter the Elysian Fields—

To joyful spots and to the sweet green glades
 Of happy groves and blest abodes they come.
 Here aether opens wider o'er the plains,
 And on them sheds a robe of lustrous light;
 And their own sun and their own stars they know.
 Some practise here their limbs on wrestling greens,
 Vying in sport, and on the yellow sand
 Strive eagerly; to dances in the ring
 Some beat the time with foot, and chant their songs.
 So too the Thracian priest with trailing robe

Sounds to their measures his seven notes diverse,
 And smites with finger now, now ivory comb.
 Here Teucer's ancient stock, a race most fair,
 Heroes high-souled, in years more prosperous born,
 Ilius, Assaracus, and Dardanus,
 Founder of Troy. Far off he, wandering, sees
 The arms and idle chariots of the men.
 Their spears are planted in the ground, their steeds
 Feed everywhere untethered o'er the plains.
 And all the pride the living men had felt
 In chariot and in arms, and all their care
 To lead their glossy steeds to pasturage,
 The same attends them buried in the earth.
 Lo! others too to right and left he sees,
 Feasting about the grass, and chanting forth
 In chorus their exultant triumph-song.
 Here is the band of those that suffered wounds
 In fighting for their land, the priest pure-lived
 So long as life remained, the holy bard
 Whose songs were worthy Phoebus' utterance,
 Or those that by discovery of arts
 Made life a higher thing, or those who caused
 That some for their good deeds remember them.
 The brows of all of these are circleted
 With snowy fillet.

6.638-665

They find Anchises, who explains divine retribution and points out the spirits who are to become the great Roman heroes and leaders; among them is Augustus himself—

"Now, hither turn, turn both thine eyes to view
 This race to come, and Romans who are thine.
 Caesar is here and all Iulus' sons
 Beneath heaven's lofty pole to pass in time.
 This is the hero—this is he of whom
 Full many times in promise thou wert told,
 Augustus Caesar, offspring of a god,
 Who once again shall found the golden age
 In Latium o'er the fields that Saturn ruled
 In days gone by; and will advance his sway
 O'er Garamantes and o'er Indian tribes."

6.788-795

Anchises concludes with a solemn admonition to the Romans to persevere in their mission—

"Others, well I ween,
 Will forge the living bronze more gracefully,
 Will from the marble lifelike features chase,
 Plead causes better, and with pointer trace
 The journeyings of the heavens, and indicate
 The rising constellations: be thou thought,
 Roman, to hold the nations in thy sway.
 These shall thine arts be; terms of peace to name,
 To spare the vanquished and war down the proud."

"Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera,
 Credo equidem, vivos ducent de marmore voltus,
 Orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus
 Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent:
 Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;
 Hae tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem,
 Parcere subiectis, et debellare superbos."

6.847-853

Book VI, and with it the first half of the *Aeneid*, closes with Aeneas' return to his ships.

Modern readers are likely to find the second half, which deals with the conquest of the promised land, less interesting; there is, in all conscience, a very great deal of fighting. But to Virgil the winning of the peace was the most important part of the story, and he himself says, at the beginning of Book VII, "A grander train of events is now before me, a grander theme I open." Virgil does give the story of the conquest better structure and greater dramatic interest than he found in his prose sources by combining many

disparate wars into one, and making Aeneas and the native champion Turnus rivals for the hand of Lavinia.

After the landing at the mouth of the Tiber, Aeneas sends emissaries to King Latinus to ask permission to settle in Latium. Latinus' daughter Lavinia has been wooed by Turnus, whose cause is favored by Queen Amata; but Latinus has been warned by omens that his daughter is to marry a foreigner, and promises her to Aeneas. Meanwhile, Juno is angered by the imminent success of Aeneas; she rouses Amata to fury, goads Turnus to war for his rights, and, by causing Ascanius to wound a pet deer, rouses the natives to fight against the Trojans.

For the war which now opens, the Latins summon all their allies, and Aeneas, admonished by Father Tiber in a dream, goes to procure the help of Evander, who welcomes him and shows him the spots which would be sacred in Roman legend. Venus asks Vulcan to make a divine suit of armor for Aeneas; the designs on the shield picture the future glories of Rome, down through the battle of Actium and the triumph of Augustus. Evander sends his young son Pallas with Aeneas, and suggests that he procure the support of the Etruscans also.

In Aeneas' absence Turnus attacks the Trojans' fortifications and succeeds in setting fire to their ships, which are then miraculously transformed into sea nymphs. At night the Trojans send Nisus and Euryalus, a young pair of devoted friends, to go through the enemy lines and summon Aeneas. The two kill and plunder a sleeping band of the enemy, but as they leave the place, are surprised by a group of horsemen under the Rutulian Volcens. Euryalus is taken, and in an attempt to win his release, Nisus kills two of the captors with his spears. Volcens is enraged at the unseen assailant, and is about to kill Euryalus, when Nisus cries out—

"Me! me! here am I, I who did the deed.
 On me your weapons, O Rutulians, turn,
 Mine all the craft; that prisoner of yours
 Nor dared, nor could do aught; this heaven I call,
 These conscious stars, to be my witnesses,
 He did but love his luckless friend too well."
 So cried he loudly. But thrust home amain
 The sword has pierced the other's ribs, and bursts
 His snow-white breast. Lifeless drops Euryalus
 And o'er his beauteous limbs the dark blood wells,
 And backward on his shoulder leans his neck
 Fallen listlessly. As when some bright-hued flower
 Root-severed by the plough is languishing
 E'en while it dies; or poppies weary-necked
 Droop down their heads, when haply they are weighed
 With rain. But Nisus rushes in their midst,
 And seeks out Volcens only 'mongst them all,
 For Volcens only stays. Round him the foe
 This side and that close gathered, hand to hand
 Would thrust him off; with no less eagerness
 He presses on, and whirls his lightning blade;
 Till full within the bawling Rutule's mouth
 He buried it, and dying, robbed of life
 His enemy. Then o'er his lifeless friend,
 Pierced through and through with wounds, he flung him
 down,

And there in placid death found rest at last.

Blest both of ye! if aught my song avail,
 No time shall ever rob you of an age
 To keep your memories, whilst Aeneas' house
 Dwells by the Capitol's enduring rock,
 And Roman father holds imperial sway.

9.427-449

The Rutulians mount a determined attack but are repulsed. After intense fighting, in which the deaths of Evander's son Pallas and of the warrior maid Camilla are the most touching episodes, Juno at last agrees that Aeneas must defeat Turnus in single combat, but pleads that when Trojans and Latins amalgamate, the name of Troy be dropped and the united race be called Latin—

When now their laws and treaties they shall bind,
 Do thou not bid the soil-born Latin folk
 Exchange their older name, nor come to be Trojans,
 Nor yet be called Teucer's sons,
 Nor that our brave men change the tongue they speak,
 Nor wear fresh garb;
 But Latium let it be, and Alban be their kings the ages
 through,
 Let offspring of the Romans grow to power by value of
 Italian.
 Fallen is Troy, let her be fallen,
 Her name along with her.

12. -828

The issue is at last resolved when, in a magnificent fight, Aeneas lays Turnus low. Heavy indeed had been the task to found the Roman state; but now all enmities were dissolved, and Rome could proceed on her path of glory and of service to mankind.

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