

Roman Epic

The Power of Prophecy

Virgil, *Aeneid* Book 6

Discussion

- *Aeneid* 6 is often compared to *Odyssey* 11, and for good reason, but there's more going on here than in the *Odyssey*.
 - What do you see as the main theme(s) in *Aeneid* 6?
 - How does this theme (or these themes) compare or contrast with what we saw in the *Odyssey*? What does that tell you about how these two epics differ overall?

Aeneid: Narrative

- Book 5:
 - Aeneas sees smoke from Dido's funeral pyre; lands in Sicily where they started; arranges funeral games for 1 year anniversary of Anchises' death; Juno inspires Trojan women to burn their ships, Jupiter's rain puts out the fire; fleet sails for Italy but Palinurus is a sacrifice to Neptune



Aeneid: Structure

- Bipartite:
 - Books 1-6 = Aeneas' *Odyssey* travelling to find a home
 - Books 7-12 = Aeneas' *Iliad* fighting to win a home
- Tripartite:
 - Books 1-4 = Dido and the tragedy of Love
 - Books 5-8 = the destiny of Rome
 - Books 9-12 = Turnus and the tragedy of war
- Ring structures and Parallel structures throughout both systems

Book 6: The Narrative

- Description of the Temple of Apollo
 - Conversing with the Sibyl (oracle)
- Burying Misenus and the golden bough
- (Terrifying) Journey to the Underworld
 - Seeing the unburied and conversing with Palinurus
 - Seeing the tragic dead (+ Dido)
 - Meeting the Trojan heroes (+ Deiphobus)
 - Hearing the evil dead
 - Seeing the blessed dead
 - Meets Anchises
 - Prophecy of future Rome
- Wandering and return

The Justice
of Fate

- Prophecy of future Rome
 - Alban kings
 - Caesar and Augustus
 - Roman kings
 - Roman heroes (of the Republic)
 - Conquest of Greece and the Roman mission
 - The fate of the two Marcelli

The “Ring Structure” of *Odyssey*, Book 11

- Arrival in the Underworld
 - Elpinor
 - Teiresias, O.’s mother
 - “Catalogue of Women”
- Phaeacians

 - Agamemnon and Clytemnestra
 - Agamemnon warns about homecoming
 - Achilles and other heroes
 - Villains and conflicted heroes
- Departure from the Underworld

What comes in the first half...

... is matched by what’s in the second half

The Not-Ring Structure of *Aeneid*, Book 6

- Description of the Temple of Apollo
 - Conversing with the Sibyl (oracle)
- Burying Misenus and the golden bough
- (Terrifying) Journey to the Underworld
 - Seeing the unburied and conversing with Palinurus
 - Seeing the tragic dead (+ Dido)
 - Meeting the Trojan heroes (+ Deiphobus)
 - Hearing the evil dead
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The Not-Ring Structure of *Aeneid*, Book 6

- Description of the Temple of Apollo
 - The Prophecy of the Gods
- Burying Misenus and the golden bough

- (Terrifying) Journey to the Underworld
 - Seeing the unburied and conversing with Palinurus
 - Seeing the tragic dead (+ Dido)
- The Power of Piety
(*what we do in life matters in the afterlife*)
 - Seeing the tragic dead
 - Meets Anchises
 - Prophecy of future Rome
- Wandering and return

- Prophecy of future Rome
 - Alban kings
 - Caesar and Augustus
 - Roman kings
 - Prophecy of “Romans”
(*the survival of a people*)
 - Conquest of Greece and the Roman mission
- The fate of the two Marcelli

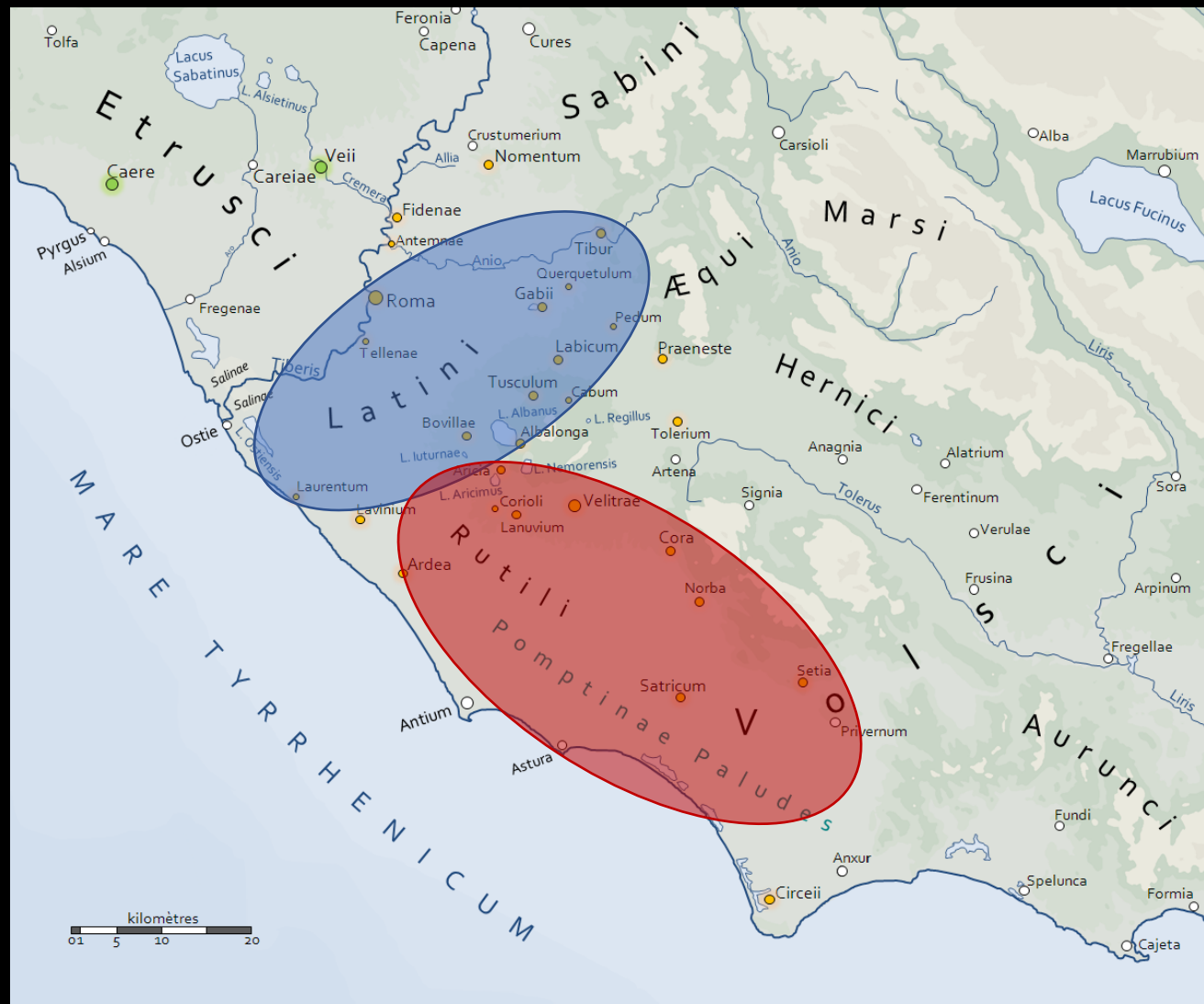
Aeneid: Narrative

- Books 7-8
 - Trojans land in Italy where they've been foretold; King Latinus breaks his daughter's engagement to Turnus to marry her to Aeneas; Turnus rallies Italic tribes against them; friendly Greeks come to the aid of Aeneas and the Latins; Aeneas receives divine armor from Venus

Aeneid: Narrative: Ancient Latium



Aeneid: Narrative: Latins vs Rutulians



Aeneid: Narrative

- Books 9-12
 - Turnus attacks the Trojan camp, breaches the gates and kills Trojan heroes but is driven away, escapes by diving into the Tiber; divine council between Venus, Juno, and Jupiter; combat duels between Trojan/Greek/Italian allies and Rutulians/allies, Greek-Trojan hero Pallas is killed;
 - Aeneas and Turnus face off in single combat to decide the war; Turnus is rescued by his sister, Aeneas is wounded by an arrow but healed by Venus; the duel resumes with Turnus quickly overwhelmed and wounded, begs to be returned to father, Aeneas almost shows mercy but notices Turnus is wearing the armor of Pallas, Turnus is executed

The Analysis

- Language and Performance
 - Again with a descriptive style, short and staccato sentences for effect
 - Virgil wants to leave us with an emotional response

The Analysis

- Language and Performance
 - Again important to recognize some modern language
 - “The unlovely water binds them to Hell” (527) is actually “Fate forbids them [to return to the living], and the mournful swamp of repulsive water binds them [to the land of the dead]”
 - “souls... when they have rolled the wheel of time through a thousand years, will be called by God” (885-6) is actually “the Manes... when they’ve rolled the wheel a thousand times through the years, the (respectfully unspecified) god calls them”
 - Easy to see how this book became an allegory of the Early Christian afterlife

The Analysis

- The Idea of the Hero
 - Bound by duty
 - Merciless in its pursuit
 - Shows piety to the gods, Fate, and family
 - “rule the world... establish peace... spare the humble... conquer the proud” (1016-8)
 - Generally a good person (786 ff.)
 - Fight for country
 - Priests and poets serve the gods and show life’s truths
 - Enrich the lives of common people



The Analysis

- The Narrator's Voice
 - So he's showing us life's truths...
 - Still along for the ride with the voice of divine truths (330-4)
 - Overt formula copied from the *Odyssey/Iliad* (744-5)
 - But...

The Analysis

- The Literary Background
 - Obviously the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*
 - Sometimes in subtle ways though, they find the Sibyl at the “Euboean beach” (3)
 - Aeneas provides retribution/justice/completion to *Iliad* (996 ff.)
 - Epic similes (sometimes with history lessons)
 - Type Scenes
 - Funeral? (268 ff.) not really a type scene, but formulaic description
 - History
 - Poetic/Epic (Ennius) and Chronicles (same sort of things Livy was using)

The Analysis

- The Social Background
 - Sibyl = Sibyl of Cumae
 - Origin of the Sibylline Books
 - Lots of aetiologies and justifications
 - Place names
 - Burial (396 ff.)
- Behavior
 - Bad (for society) (739 ff.)
 - Good (for society) (785 ff.)



Elihu Vedder, *The Cumaean Sibyl* (1876)

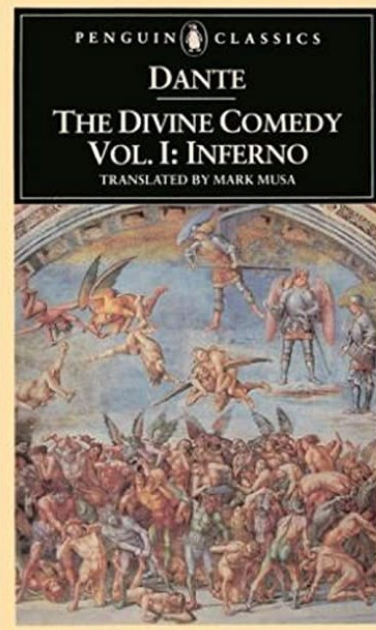
Of course, no historical Sibyl would ever have looked like this...

The Analysis

- The Social Background
 - Religion
 - Proper sacrifices in proper form (299 ff.)
 - Importance of Fate (protected by Jupiter)
 - Obeying Fate shows piety to the gods
 - “stop hoping that the gods’ decrees / can be bent with prayers (455-6)
 - The Roman Underworld ≠ the (Old) Greek Underworld
 - Divided by how life was lived
 - Reincarnation
 - Not necessarily what everyone believed...



*Would this
be a proper*



The Ultimate Point of the Epic

- How did this progression happen?



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- How did this progression happen?

