

Myth Notes

Outline of Euripides' *Medea* (431 BCE)

Prologue (1-130) The Nurse (monologue) sets the scene of Jason's betrayal; the Nurse and Tutor (in dialogue); Tutor brings in children and reports that Medea and children are to be banished. Medea speaks from within house.

Parodos (131-212) Medea (within), Nurse, Chorus. The Nurse is at the door of the house to receive the chorus while Medea cries out her pain from inside. Chorus and nurse express concern and sympathy for Medea.

First Episode (213-409) Medea and Chorus: Medea appears, states her case in a remarkable speech and wins over the chorus. Medea and Creon: Creon punishes Medea by exiling her and her children from Corinth. Medea is granted delay of one day to make preparations; Creon exits and Medea immediately reveals plans of revenge.

First Stasimon (410-445) Chorus sings of about the reversal of things

Second Episode (446-626) Jason and Medea meet for the first time for a scene of blame—each blames the other.

Second Stasimon (627-662) Chorus on immoderate loves and plight of the refugee

Third Episode (663-823) Aegeus and Medea: Medea persuades Aegeus to grant her asylum in Athens in return for providing him with children.

Third Stasimon (824-865) Chorus sing of Harmony and Athens. How will polluted Medea find a home there?

Fourth Episode (866-975) Jason and Medea: a (feigned) reconciliation, the reverse of episode two. Medea sends poisoned gifts with children to Glauke.

Fourth Stasimon (976-1001) Chorus expresses sympathy for the children, princess, Jason, and Medea.

Fifth Episode (1002-1080) Paedagogus and Medea: Paedagogus returns with children. Medea struggles with decision to murder the children.

Fifth Stasimon (1081-1115) Chorus sings of the virtues of childlessness.

Sixth Episode (1116-1250) Medea and Messenger: Messenger brings word of deaths in palace, bids Medea escape. Medea steels herself to kill the children.

Sixth Stasimon (1251-1292) Chorus calls upon the Sun to look upon the murder, laments the slaughter. Cries of the children heard in the house.

Exodos (1293-1419) Jason and Medea with dead children (on *mechane*/chariot of the Sun): Jason begs for children, Medea refuses, predicts Jason's demise, declares the establishment of the of Hera Akraia.

CLCV 2000 Classical Mythology

Virgil's *Aeneid*

I. Earlier Background

- A. Virgil: Publius Vergilius Maro.
- B. Famous in his own lifetime; first poems in history of Latin literature to have been the subject of lectures by a contemporary teacher.
- C. Born in Mantua, 15 October 70 BCE.
- E. Educated at Cremona and Rome. Mantua only received citizenship from Julius Caesar in 49 when Virgil was 21.
- F. 49-46 Civil war in which Caesar finally defeated Pompey; Caesar assassinated in 44, another round of civil wars followed.
- G. Brutus and Cassius defeated by Mark Antony and Octavian.
- H. Third round of civil war in 31, Octavian finally victorious, returned to Rome in 29, in 27 took the name Augustus.
- I. The first 51 years of the poet's life, 29 were of war, 16 of civil war, in the proscriptions of 42/1 at least 150 senators and 2,000 equestrians died, allies devastated by war, famine, land expropriation (especially Mantua). We know the names of 50 suicides in this period.
- J. Themes such as despair, hope for deliverance, restoration of the greatness and security of Rome are of high importance in the poetry of Virgil.
- K. Virgil steps into a poetic and political void.

1. The neoterics like Catullus, with an elitist bent that spurned the tastes of the bourgeoisie and took no interest in politics, the grand detached philosophical enterprise of Lucretius.
2. There was no voice expressing and elevating the moral and political ideas of the community, such as done by Homer or the Tragedians of Greece.
3. Virgil was able to combine the refinement that the neoterics had worked to establish (there was no turning back from it, really) with the depth of thought shown by Lucretius . . .

L. From 43-38 Virgil produced a book of pastoral poems, the *Eclogues*.

1. Model is a Greek writer of the 3rd cent. BCE, Theocritus, who wrote very melodious poetry that seemed deceptively simple.
2. Theocritus' subject matter was bucolic, shepherds and their love lives, written to invoke a certain feeling of longing or nostalgia in the reader for simpler times and a simpler life.
3. Poems actually quite complex and learned.
4. Greek poetry and culture had an almost inestimable effect on Roman society.
 - a. In the 3rd century it seemed that Latin might go the way of other cultures who were so overwhelmed by Greek superiority in language and literature that they dropped many of their own literary conventions and their own languages and took up writing Greek.
 - b. Early Latin literature began in the same way with an early translation of Homer and copies of Greek originals. These were mostly produced by Greeks in Italy or men who were not from Rome itself.
 - c. Rome itself took an importantly different route: not simply surrendering to Greek superiority or ignoring the difference, but "undertaking the task of creating in Latin a literature fit to stand beside that of Greece."
 - d. Creation of a Latin vocabulary/terminology.

5. Theocritan verse chosen by Virgil because it was of a high technical standard of elegance and not yet hackneyed in Rome by Latin imitators.
6. Also, there was a tension between naturalism and artifice, an innate complexity that could be exploited by Virgil for handling complex ideas or dangerous material without making his own position explicit.

M. The publication of the *Eclogues* establishes Virgil as a leading poet.

1. About this time he enters the circle and patronage of Maecenas, Augustus' Minister for the Arts.
2. From now on Virgil lived mostly in Naples, infrequently visiting Rome.
3. We know little of his private life. He appears to have been shy, retiring. He never married.

N. In 29 his next poem, the *Georgics*, appears.

1. Modeled on Hesiod's *Works and Days*; divided into 4 books but really one long poem
2. Addressed to Maecenas and Octavian
3. Octavian had recently defeated Mark Antony in 31; Octavian ruled the Roman empire at the age of 32.
4. The *Georgics* pick up on the anxiety and hope of this contemporary political situation.
5. It is a didactic work, but nominally so. There is a "pervasive moral and reflective colouring."
 - a. Griffin, "The philosophy of hard work (*labor*) is expounded and traced back to the will of Jupiter himself; the life of the country man is glorified, transfigured, extolled; patriotic themes of hope for Rome's future and shame for her recent past run all through the poem."

- b. Octavian made a great effort to restore a healthy moral climate: introduced laws which made adultery illegal, encouraged marriage, limited conspicuous consumption, curbed excesses of the previous generation generally.
- c. The *Georgics* shows some sympathy with these aims, maybe not with the means. The poem is not straightforward moralizing but polyphonal and ambiguous.

II. Background to *Aeneid*

- A. Griffin, "An epic poem in twelve Books challenged Homer, but it also made an immediate gesture towards him of submission." "At the same time, the *Aeneid* aspires to comprehend both Homeric epics."
- B. Virgil worked on the poem for 10 years, unfinished when he died in 19 BCE.
- C. Still contains a number of half-lines and bits that were left to be polished up later.
- D. Tone of the poem
 - 1. Virgil decided that a heroic epic had to be set in heroic times. Couldn't be about a contemporary without becoming absurd.
 - 2. Augustus was brought into the poem by means of prophetic statement and also by comparisons and juxtapositions that would suggest contemporary times to his audience.
 - 3. "The story of Aeneas must in addition be paradigmatic not only of Augustus but also of the destiny of Rome in the most general terms: the glory and also the unhappiness of being an imperialist."
 - 4. Poem has two aims: do justice to a passionate Roman patriotism not echoed in the *Iliad*, but also to do justice to feelings of "regret and dismay at the human cost of empire" (Griffin).
- E. How does Virgil go about composing the epic?

1. Not simply an epic poem to flatter Augustus. General doctrine in antiquity that the highest forms of verse were epic and tragedy, epic being supreme. To succeed in these highest forms was to truly be a great poet.
2. Time for such an epic promising. Ennius now considered quaint.
3. Politically oportune also. Virgil probably felt both hopes and apprehensions in the rise of Augustus.
4. What kind of epic would it be then?
 - a. Could it be an epic on the career of Augustus?
 - b. It couldn't be because, for one, the precedence of Homer meant that Virgil's epic must be composed in the Homeric manner, set in the world of gods and heroes.

Griffin, "The participation of the divine marks the events as truly significant, not only in themselves but as examples of the whole relationship of men with gods, and so with the limits and definition of human life."
 - c. The divine machinery also problematic. Could one have Venus appear to Augustus like Thetis does with Achilles, or Athena with Odysseus without it seeming absurd?
 - d. Could recent politics be represented in a highly partisan way, with Brutus, Cassius, Mark Antony villains? Would this prove distasteful and limit room for pathos? Would it amount to little more than propaganda without the moral complexity bound up in the recent history of Rome?
5. What Virgil does is, as Griffin says with some hyperbole, "write on the one real myth ever produced and believed in by Romans: the myth of Rome herself."
 - a. Augustus, the adopted son of Julius Caesar.

- b. Caesar belonged to an ancient aristocratic family that claimed to be descended from the Trojan hero Aeneas, son of Aphrodite/Venus.
 - c. That provided a link to the world of epic
 - d. Early tradition too, Cato the Elder wrote more than 100 years earlier that Aeneas and his Trojans came to Latium.
6. What Virgil does is make the subject of his poem Aeneas rather than Augustus and in particular the following three elements

- a. The story of the foundation of Rome.

This showed that the Romans were the equals in antiquity and heroism of the Greeks, that the founding of their city was a work of heaven

- b. The history of Rome.

This was done by a series of prophetic allusions and revelations sprinkled throughout the poem. It showed again that the gods were on the side of Rome.

- c. The deliverance of Rome by Augustus.

Augustus is the climax of the history of Rome, a second Aeneas

Outline of Vergil's *Aeneid*

The *Aeneid* tells of the career of Aeneas, who survives the sack of Troy and is given the task of transferring the Trojan gods to Italy and establishing there a community that shall one day found Rome.

The first six books record the wandering of the hero and recall the *Odyssey*, the second six books record the fighting in Italy and recall the *Iliad* (but there are important bits of each in both halves).

Book 1

1. Prologue

- The opening deliberately recalls Homer's invocations. The question of the gods' wrath is untraditional.
- The juxtaposition of orthodox with the new is characteristic of Virgil.
- Homer asks the Muse for facts, Virgil for a justification.
- The partisanship of the gods in Homer bothered serious thinkers for years and Virgil allows that vein of moral criticism into the epic itself.
- We see from Juno's wrath that the answer to Virgil's question 'Can there be so much anger in the hearts of the heavenly gods?' was apparently 'Yes.'

2. Juno's wrath

3. The storm (Aeolus)

- 1.148ff. first simile of the poem; possible reference to Augustus

4. Neptune calms the storm

5. Trojans land near Carthage

6. Venus complains to Jupiter

7. Jupiter's prophecy

- Jupiter's programmatic prophecy 1.254ff.: Aeneas will found Lavinium, Ascanius Alba Longa (traditional home of Julian family), Romulus Rome.
- Griffin, "It is part of the cruelty of Aeneas' destiny that he must sacrifice everything to the god-given task of founding Rome, and yet that he will not be allowed to do it."

8. Mercury prepares a favorable reception in Carthage

9. Aeneas meets with Venus, learns of Carthage and Dido

10. Aeneas in the city of Carthage

- 1.456 *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt*
- Griffin, "Sharing in the sorrows of others guarantees humanity and gentle treatment"

11. Aeneas encounters Dido

12. Venus causes Dido to begin to fall in love with Aeneas

Book 2

In books 2 and 3 Aeneas recounts his adventures from the fall of Troy to his landing in Africa; this follows the model of Odysseus trip to the Phaeacians.

In order to avoid making Aeneas look unheroic, Virgil goes to some length to show that the fall of Troy was unavoidable and Aeneas is given several warnings to that effect (Hector in a dream, his mother in person, a Trojan priest). Aeneas is unwilling to accept these warnings until the supernatural flame burns around his son's head.

1. The Fall of Troy
2. The wooden horse
3. Laocoon
4. Sinon
5. Hector appears to Aeneas
6. Aeneas rushes into battle
7. Rape of Cassandra
8. Death of Priam
9. Helen
10. Aeneas returns home to Anchises, Ascanius, and Creusa
11. Creusa's ghost
12. Troy abandoned

Serpent imagery in book 2

- A. Emphatic recurrence of the image of the serpent.
- B. The ferocity of the Greek attackers, the deceit and the flames which are the result of their actions are time and again compared to the serpent.
- C. Like the serpent the Greeks strike from concealment.
- D. Sounds of fire and snakes: hiss, creep, flicker.
- E. Only three explicit passages
 - 1. Laocoon
 - 2. Androgeos compared to a man who comes unaware upon a snake
 - 3. Pyrrhus compared to a snake that has cast away its old skin.
- F. There is a progression in the imagery, which first seems indicative of Greek violence but this gives way to the notion of the snake shedding its skin, transforming with the rebirth of Troy in Italy.
- G. The Laocoon story is a symbolic prophecy of the fall of Troy as a whole.
 - 1. The two snakes are representative of the two leaders of the Greeks, Agamemnon and Menelaus. Both the snakes and the Atridae are called *gemmae* 'twins'. The descriptions of the approach of the snakes and the approach of the Greek ships show many verbal echoes.
 - 2. Their destruction of Laocoon the priest represents the Greek overturning of religion and the driving out of the Trojan gods.
 - 3. After the snakes kill Laocoon and his sons they go to the citadel and wrap themselves around the feet of Athena, patroness of the city.
- H. The imagery is continued (to cite a few):
 - 1. When, upon seeing this event Virgil writes that a new fear *wound its way* into our hearts.

2. The Trojan horse is pulled into the city, but it is said literally that it '*glides in* upon the city'.
3. When the Greeks arrive the Trojans are all settled into a drunken sleep; 'sleep *winds itself about* our weary limbs'. This is the same phrase that Virgil uses to describe the snakes winding about the limbs of Laocoon's sons.
4. Again the danger of sleep is signaled when, before the description of his dream with its warning from Hector, Aeneas says that it was the time when first slumber begins, that most welcome slumber which *creeps in* (*serpit*).
5. The name of Sinon, which is reminiscent of Latin *sinus*, *sinuo*, to be curved, to move in waves, who says that he escaped from the Greeks and lay hidden all night in a muddy swamp. The word for 'lay hidden' is used in particular of the serpent.
6. Pyrrhus is very much like the serpents. Like them he kills the sons of Priam first, like them he kills at the altar. In lines 471ff. Pyrrhus is compared to a snake.
7. The final appearance of the theme is 682ff., the flame around Ascanius' head, which is full of vocabulary used in these other snake passages. Knox, "All previous significances of the serpent are here by implication summed up and rejected in favor of the new."

Book 3

- Thrace-Polydorus
- Delos and Crete
- Strophades, Harpies
- Helenus and Andromache
- Sicily, The Cyclopes, Acestes
- Death of Anchises

Book 4

- Dido in love; Anna
- Apparent reconciliation between Juno and Venus
- The hunt and the cave; "Marriage" of Dido and Aeneas
- Jupiter sends Mercury
- Aeneas departs
- Dido's suicide

Book 5

- Palinurus, Diversion to Sicily
- Anniversary of Anchises' death
- Funeral Games
 - Ship Race-Cloanthus
 - Foot Race-Nisus and Euryalus
 - Boxing Match-Entellus and Dares
 - Archery Contest-Eurytion, Acestes's arrow catches fire
 - Ascanius leads the young men in the "Trojan Game"
- Juno send Iris to the Trojan women
- The women set fire to the ships
- Advice of Nautes: leave the weak in Sicily with Acestes
- Anchises appears in a dream
- Venus asks Neptune to provide safe passage
- Death of Palinurus

Book 6

- Arrival at Italy
- The Sybil
- Request to see Anchises; The Golden Bough
- Misenus
- Journey to the Underworld
 - Charon
 - Palinurus
 - Cerberus
 - Vale of Mourning-Dido
 - Famous Warriors-Deiphobus
 - Tisiphone and Tartarus
 - Elysium
 - Anchises
 - Future Heroes of Rome
 - Alban Kings
 - Romulus and Augustus
 - Marcellus

- Return through the Gates of Sleep

Book 7

- Arrival in Latium
- Latinus and Lavinia; Faunus
- Trojans eat their “tables”
- Embassy to Latinus; Ilioneus
- Allecto and Amata
- Allecto and Turnus
- Ascanius and Silvia’s Stag
- Juno opens the gates of war
- Muster of the Italian forces
 - Mezentius and Lausus; Aventinus; Catillus and Coras; Messapus; Clausus; Halaesus; Oebalus; Ufens; Umbro; Virbius; Turnus; Camilla

Book 8

- Aeneas' dream-vision of Tiberinus; sacrifice of a sow
- Aeneas' reception at Pallanteum by Evander
 - Hercules and Cacus
 - Arcadian Rome
- Venus persuades Vulcan to forge arms for Aeneas
- Alliance with Evander; Pallas
- The Shield of Aeneas
 - Romulus and Remus
 - Rape of the Sabine Women
 - Mettus
 - Porsenna’s siege of Rome
 - Gauls occupy Rome
 - Catiline and Cato
 - The Battle of Actium and Augustus’ triple triumph

Book 9

- Juno sends Iris to Turnus
- The Metamorphosis of the Trojan Ships
- Nisus and Euryalus; Volscens
- Turnus and the Rutuli attack the Trojan camp
- Ascanius and Numanus (Remulus)
- Pandarus and Bitias open the gate
- Turnus inside the Trojan camp

Book 10

- Council of the Gods
- The Etruscan Allies

- Aeneas and Cymodocea
- Return of Aeneas
- The Battle Continues
- Death of Pallas; Pallas's Appeal to Hercules
- Aeneas attacks
- Juno deceives and saves Turnus
- Contest of Aeneas with Lausus and Mezentius

Some notes on individual books

Book 5

This book falls into two parts, first 2/3 given to landing in Sicily and competing in the Games for Anchises, last 1/3 describing the destruction of the ships by the women and its repercussions.

I. Palinurus advises diversion to Sicily

II. Anniversary of Anchises' death

III. Funeral Games

A. Funeral games were a traditional element of epic, Virgil has cleverly included them into his epic.

B. They follow on model of Achilles' games for Patroclus, but differ from them in several ways.

C. For Homer the games for Patroclus were a chance to indicate the rehabilitation of Achilles, to put him in a position of arbitrator over contestants, and to show how civility could be maintained when individuals were magnanimous in their loss. The whole event stands in marked contrast to the strife between Agamemnon and Achilles at the beginning of book 1.

D. For Virgil the games are a chance to build up the character of Aeneas. No rehabilitation is needed here. Instead the games show several important aspects of Aeneas.

1. His piety towards his father
2. His ability to control the entire situation
3. His ability to diffuse tense situations
4. His magnanimity by giving rewards generously to everyone

E. A certain development in the games:

1. Ship Race: Cloanthus; Sergestus loses through recklessness.
2. Foot Race: Nisus and Euryalus, Nisus loses by accidental fall, Salius through the trickery of Nisus.
This also lays the groundwork for the night raid of Nisus and Euryalus in book 9.
3. Boxing Match: Entellus and Dares; Dares loses because of his pride and poor judgement.
4. Archery Contest: Eurytion, Acestes' arrow catches fire; Acestes loses (through no fault of his own) and wins at the same time.
5. Ascanius leads the young men in the "Trojan Game"; the games are capped off with this sweet scene.

IV. Juno sends Iris to the Trojan women

V. The women set fire to the ships

VI. Advice of Nautes: leave the weak in Sicily with Acestes

VII. Anchises appears in a dream

VIII. Venus asks Neptune to provide safe passage

IX. Death of Palinurus

Book 6

I. Homeric model from *Od.* 11, but with several additions.

II. Homer's version of the underworld contains punishments, but is free of any really ghoulish horrors.

III. Virgil adds monsters, Furies 'shapes terrible to see', the ferryman Charon, Cerberus.

IV. Interpretation of this book not simple

A. The list of future heroes could be read simply as nationalistic pride or Augustan propaganda.

B. Griffin, "The parade of Roman heroes is punctuated by passages whose tenor is plaintive and regretful."

1. Lucius Brutus, founder of the Republic, killed his own sons for bringing back the banished king.

2. Caesar and Pompey, who as we know will not hear the appeal to lay down arms.

3. "Others, I do not doubt it, will beat bronze into figures that breathe more softly. Others will draw living likenesses out of marble. Others will plead cases better or describe with their rod the courses of the stars across the sky

and predict their risings. Your task, Roman, and do not forget it, will be to govern the peoples of the world in your empire. These will be your arts—and to impose a settled pattern upon peace, to pardon the defeated and war down the proud.”

4. Marcellus, Augustus’ nephew and heir, Octavia’s son. Died in 23 at age 19. Octavia supposedly passed out when Virgil read line 882.

Griffin, “The great parade of generals and statemen ends with loss, defeat, impotent regret.”

Book 7

The following books describe the wars stirred up by Juno in Italy. Introduced by a second invocation of the Muse.

- I. Latinus King of Laurentum, daughter Lavinia betrothed to Italian noble Turnus.
- II. Latinus makes alliance with Trojans, understanding that Aeneas fulfills prophecy that a stranger should marry Lavinia. Amata, Latinus’ wife is against this marriage and is used by Juno to cause trouble.
- III. Juno send Allecto to cause Amata and her women to run crazed, stirs Turnus to war.
- IV. Allecto creates a situation in which Ascanius kills a sacred stag and the Latins seek revenge.
 - A. There is a strong resemblance here to the situation earlier with Dido, who is earlier compared to a wounded deer.
 - B. Symbolism: “the god-sent invaders destroy the innocent. In both cases there was no intention of doing such harm, but the harm is done” (Griffin).
- V. Fighting erupts and Latinus, incapable of doing anything, withdraws privately.

VI. Book ends with review of the Italian forces: Mezentius and Lausus; Aventinus; Catillus and Coras; Messapus; Clausus; Halaesus; Oebalus; Ufens; Umbro; Virbius; Turnus; Camilla.

Book 8

- I. Book falls into 2 parts, the alliance with Evander and the description of the making and design of the shield.
- II. Evander lives in a humble settlement at the foot of the Palatine hill, on the site which will one day be that of Rome. He is shown the site of the future city, where the Forum will be one day.
- III. The model for the shield is Hephaestus' shield in the *Iliad* 18, which depicted the whole world.
- IV. "Virgil's shield depicts the history of Rome, and that history is one of war" (Griffin).
- V. The Shield of Aeneas
 - A. Romulus and Remus
 - B. Rape of the Sabine Women
 - C. Mettus
 - D. Porsenna's siege of Rome
 - E. Gauls occupy Rome
 - F. Catiline and Cato
 - G. The Battle of Actium and Augustus' triple triumph