

VERGIL AND THE AENEID

Vergil (P. Vergilius Maro): Life & Works

70 born near Mantua (Cisalpine Gaul)

Studies Epicureanism in Naples

42 family farm confiscated, then restored

?39/38 Eclogues

- Collection of ten poems
- Modelled on Gk. poet Theocritus (III BC)
- "Pastoral" mode: singing shepherds
- Setting: idyllic Arcadian countryside
- Political undertones
 - 1 & 9: land confiscations
 - 4: birth of 'messianic' child
- Leads to patronage by Maecenas

29 Georgics

- Poem on farming in 4 books
- Model: Hesiod, Works & Days (c. 750 BC)
- Conclusion: Orpheus myth

27-19 Aeneid

- Unfinished & published posthumously
- Incomplete lines & "scaffolding"
- inauthentic (?) Helen episode (Book II)

The Aeneid: Sources, Form

Sources

- Foundation legend (Aeneas) > variant: Aeneas as Trojan traitor
- Aeneas & Dido: < Naevius's Punic War?
- Vergilian invention

Meter: Dactylic Hexameter (unrhymed, six-beat line)

Twelve books (= scrolls)

- (1-6) Odyssey + (7-12) Iliad
- (1-4) Carthage -> (5-8) Italy -> (9-12) War

Vergilian Technique

- "Subjective style": involved narrator
- Cinematic style: non-continuous narrative (flashbacks); change of focus, perspective
- Incorporation of later history (prophecy, flashforwards, typology)

Key Issues

- What kind of hero is Aeneas?
- Augustan or anti-Augustan?
- Optimism or pessimism?