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The Aeneid of Virgil

A verse translation by
Allen Mandelbaum



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THE HERO AS SINGER

AENEID

I. 625-659

Just at the center of the city stood 625
a thickly shaded wood; this was the place
where, when they landed, the Phoenicians first—
hurled there by whirlwind and by wave—dug up
an omen that Queen Juno had pointed out:
the head of a fierce stallion. This had meant 630
the nation's easy wealth and fame in war
throughout the ages. Here Sidonian Dido
was building a stupendous shrine for Juno,
enriched with gifts and with the goddess' statue,
where flights of steps led up to brazen thresholds; 635
the architraves were set on posts of brass;
the grating hinges of the doors were brass.
Within this grove, the sights—so strange to him—
have, for the first time, stilled Aeneas' fear;
here he first dared to hope he had found shelter, 640
to trust more surely in his shattered fortunes.
For while he waited for the queen, he studied
everything in that huge sanctuary,
marveling at a city rich enough
for such a temple, at the handiwork 645
of rival artists, at their skillful tasks.
He sees the wars of Troy set out in order:
the battles famous now through all the world,
the sons of Atreus and of Priam, and
Achilles, savage enemy to both. 650
He halted. As he wept, he cried: "Achates,
where on this earth is there a land, a place
that does not know our sorrows? Look! There is Priam!
Here, too, the honorable finds its due
and there are tears for passing things; here, too, 655
things mortal touch the mind. Forget your fears;
this fame will bring you some deliverance."
He speaks. With many tears and sighs he feeds
his soul on what is nothing but a picture.

II. 1-8

A SUDDEN SILENCE fell on all of them;
their eyes were turned, intent on him. And father
Aeneas, from his high couch, then began:

"O Queen—too terrible for tongues the pain
you ask me to renew, the tale of how 5
the Danaans could destroy the wealth of Troy,
that kingdom of lament: for I myself
saw these sad things; I took large part in them.

THE HERO AS SINGER

AENEID

VI. 1110-1137

“And there is Mummius, who—famous for 1110
his slaying of Achaeans, conqueror
of Corinth—will yet drive his chariot
triumphantly to the high Capitol.
There stands Aemilius Paulus, the destroyer
of Agamemnon’s own Mycenae and 1115
of Argos and the sons of Aeacus,
the seed of powerful-in-arms Achilles:
he will yet avenge the Trojan elders and
Minerva’s outraged altars. Who could leave
to silence you, great Cato, or you, Cossus? 1120
Who can ignore the Gracchi or the Scipios,
twin thunderbolts of war, the lash of Libya;
Fabricius, so strong and with so little;
or you, Serranus, as you sow your furrow?
And Fabii, where does your prodding lead me— 1125
now weary—with your many deeds and numbers!
You are that Maximus, the only man
who, by delaying, gave us back our fortunes.
For other peoples will, I do not doubt,
still cast their bronze to breathe with softer features, 1130
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: 1135
to teach the ways of peace to those you conquer,
to spare defeated peoples, tame the proud.”

THE HERO AS SINGER

AENEID

IX. 798-829

“Twice-conquered Phrygians, are you not ashamed
to be hemmed in again by siege and ramparts,
to set up walls between yourselves and death? 800
Look, those who want to take our brides by battle!
What god brought you to Italy or what
insanity? Do not expect to find
the sons of Atreus here or fable-babbling
Ulysses, but a race from sturdy stock. 805
For first we bear our infants to the river
and harden them by cruel frost and water;
and then our boys grow keen in hunting, ranging
the forests; and their sports are breaking horses
and aiming arrows from their bows. As youths 810
they learn frugality and patient labor
and tame the earth with harrows or compel
defiant towns to tremble. All our life
is spent with steel; we goad the backs of bullocks
with our inverted spears, and even slow 815
old age can never sap our force of spirit
or body’s vigor. We clamp down gray hairs
beneath a helmet, always take delight
in our new plunder, in a violent life.
But you wear robes of saffron, ornamented 820
and gleaming purple; you like laziness,
and you delight in dances; and your tunics
have sleeves, your bonnets, ribbons. You indeed
are Phrygian women—hardly Phrygian men:
now go, prance through high Dindyma, there where 825
the twin-mouthed pipes delight familiar ears!
The timbrel and the Berecynthian flute
of Ida’s mother summon you to revels;
leave arms to men, you have had enough of swords.”