

Reading / class exercises relating to the 'Transitional Trojans' talk

Scholarship relating to 'Transitional Trojans' talk

Morwood, J. (1991) 'Aeneas, Augustus, and the Theme of the City', *Greece and Rome*, 28.1: 212-223

James, S. L. (1995) 'Establishing Rome with the Sword: *condere* in the *Aeneid*', *American Journal of Philology* 116: 623-37. *The argument is clear despite some discussion of Latin.*

1. Livy's preface to his *History of Rome*

Students may read this to get some ideas about how other Augustan writers were thinking about the value of writing down the legendary tales of Rome's earliest years.

Q: What is the difference between myth, legend, and history?

Q: What is the point of writing about the past, for Livy?

Q: Is Livy, as a historian, likely to have different priorities from Virgil, as an epic poet?

Further reading:

Kraus, C. S. and Woodman, A. J. (1997) *Latin Historians*. Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics. Oxford. *See introduction (on Roman historians) and ch. 3 (on Livy).*

2. Euripides' *Trojan Women*

This is worth reading alongside the tale of the fall of Troy in *Aeneid* 2.

Q: Why might staging the fall of a city be of interest to Athenians in 415BCE, who were at that point fighting Sparta in the Peloponnesian War and cruelly crushing any cities that weren't explicitly supporting them? Consider, for example, the nearly contemporaneous siege of Melos.

Q: What does the play tell us about how women in the ancient world are affected by war and the fall of their cities? Does Virgil show the same awareness of this?

Q: Can we see other ways and places in which Virgil uses tragic themes in his epic? Try *Aeneid* 4.

Further reading:

Hardie, P. R. (1997) 'Virgil and Tragedy' in C. Martindale, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*, 312-326.

3. Propertius 4.1

Read this poem alongside Aeneas' visit to Evander in Pallanteum, in *Aeneid* 8. It is the first poem from Propertius' fourth book of elegies, where he moves from writing love elegies to more experimental elegiac poetry.

Q: Why would Roman audiences find descriptions of their city set in a rustic / impoverished / innocent past so interesting and entertaining?

Q: How relevant is Augustus' emphasis on making improvements to the city's buildings, and on returning the city to a conservative moralism?

Q: Augustans have been described as having an 'hourglass' interest in the past, i.e. an obsession with their immediate history and with their ancient history, but less with what comes in between. Why might this be? (Consider referring back to the Livy.)

Further reading:

Edwards, C. (1996) *Writing Rome: Textual Approaches to the City*. Cambridge, esp. 52-57. *This is an excellent book, but only tangentially useful. Try chapter 1, 'The City of Memories'.*

4. Analyse an essay

'Is the *Aeneid* a Celebration of Empire- or a Critique?' Daniel Mendelsohn, *The New Yorker*, 8th October 2018: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/15/is-the-aeneid-a-celebration-of-empire-or-a-critique>

Read either the whole article, or a short passage such as the following:

'What is the *Aeneid* about? It is about a tiny band of outcasts, the survivors of a terrible persecution. It is about how these survivors—clinging to a divine assurance that an unknown and faraway land will become their new home—arduously cross the seas, determined to refashion themselves as a new people, a nation of victors rather than victims. It is about how, when they finally get there, they find their new homeland inhabited by locals who have no intention of making way for them. It is about how this geopolitical tragedy generates new wars, wars that will, in turn, trigger further conflicts: *bella horrida bella* ['wars, dreadful wars']. It is about how such conflicts leave those involved in them morally unrecognizable, even to themselves.'

Q: Find all the words that Mendelsohn uses to describe the Trojans. What does he see as the defining features of the Trojans' status?

Q: Does Mendelsohn's article seem particularly appropriate to someone writing in the United States, or is it more universal?

Q: How can modern writers make sense of their own country's history through their reading of the *Aeneid*?

5. Class debate

Q. Based on how the Trojans travel across the Mediterranean and what happens when they arrive in Italy, which of the following words do you think best describes them:

1. Refugees?
2. Colonisers?
3. Something else? (Exiles? Immigrants? Imperialists?)

Preliminary resources:

- <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

'A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.'

- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/>

Colony. 'A body of people living in a new territory but retaining ties with the parent state' (Merriam Webster dictionary)

Colonization. 'The action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.'

Colonization. 'The action of appropriating a place or domain for one's own use' (Oxford English Living Dictionaries)

Q: Would the Trojans be described differently by other communities within the epic (e.g. the locals in North Africa, or the Greeks in Italy)?

Q: Might they have been described differently again by Augustan readers, who were engaged in aggressive and unapologetic imperial expansion?