

Analysis of virgils aeneid prologue

Literature



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In writing Aeneid, Virgil was attempting to respond to Homer's Greek-centric works, such as The Iliad and Odyssey. In fact, the structure of Virgil's story is very similar to Homer's epics; the parallel with Homer's works can be found in Virgil's attempt to define the two parts of the story as an odyssey and a tale of war--though in reverse of Homer's story structure. Because of the widespread use of Latin, Virgil succeeded in reaching a large audience and, as a result, was able to share and expand on the idea of the Roman hero.

The central theme of order vs. chaos can be found in Virgil's description of Aeneas' journey across the treacherous seas. "A fugitive, this captain, buffeted/ Cruelly on land as on the sea/ By blows from powers of the air-- behind them, / Baleful Juno in her sleepless rage" illustrates the representation of chaos--Juno being the embodiment of emotional rage--stirring the weather and causing havoc. Order is found in the presence of Aeneas as he fights to reach Rome--the land of rational thought and law. Another theme is the ideal figure of the Roman hero; Aeneas is presented as the perfect example of Roman self-sacrifice, piety and clear-minded purpose. When Virgil states: "A man apart, devoted to his mission--/ To undergo so many perilous days/ And enter on so many trials" he is telling the reader of the exceptional strength--of both mind and body--found in his main protagonist.

The role of destiny plays a major role in Aeneas' story. At the start of the prologue, we learn that "He came to Italy by destiny" and the reader understands the important nature of Aeneas' assignment and purpose. Virgil ends his prologue with the following lines: "They wandered as their destiny

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drove them on/ From one sea to the next: so hard and huge/ A task it was to found the Roman people." The glory of Rome has its own destiny--to work as a center for justice and order in a primarily chaotic world. Virgil's Aeneid serves to showcase the Roman ethic of selflessness and service, using it as an answer to Homer's more morally individualistic approach. Virgil's Prologue successfully gives the reader a taste of the many challenges facing Aeneas and the epic journey ahead.