

Makin a saint sacrifice: euryalus's mother



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Euryalus's mother always stood out among the others. She left the other mothers behind to stay with her son while most of the women decided to live in Sicily instead of traveling this arduous journey. She also was highlighted in the battle in which her son died as she ran among the soldiers to the front line to find Euryalus's body as soon as the word reached her. Distinctions were further made between her and the others grieving over the very recognizable body of her son by the speech she gave at his side. This speech said much about the heightened importance of sacrifice and self sacrifice found in *The Aeneid*, versus either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, through the sacrifices made for Euryalus by his mother and the other people in his life and death.

Euryalus's mother's entire presence in the poem, *The Aeneid*, seemed to be of sacrifice for her son. Over and over again, she puts his life above her own, a concept not seen in Homer's epics. The speech she gives by his side when she sees him dead speaks of her dying as well. "Put your spears into me, Rutulians, if you can be moved," she says to the men around her, and "dispatch this hateful soul to the abyss," she says to Zeus, begging them to take her life (*Aeneid* 9. 700-04). Her life was so focused on Euryalus, it means very little to her without him in it. She risked her life to get to his body to give this moving speech after she heard by word of mouth that he had been killed, ignoring the fighting and going to the front line of the battle for him (*Aeneid* 9. 675-79). This is only after she selflessly left behind the other mothers, many of whom could have been her friends, when they decided to stop at Sicily and founded Aethilla, so she could continue on with her son (*Aeneid* 5. 825-8). This was not the case in *The Odyssey*, as familiar

bonds did not constitute much for sacrifice. Telemachus rarely if at all defended his mother, thinking more of himself and his missing father. Odysseus refused temptation in order to return home to his family, but this was debatably selfish as he lost his crew's lives through often-times stupid, selfish, and narcissistic ways in the process, placing more effort into achieving his own goals than taking care of an entire crew of men. He caused many lives to be lost simply because his ego pushed him to reveal his name to a cyclopes whom he had previously refused giving his name to, thus showing that he knew of some kind of danger relating to giving a name freely. On the contrary, Aeneas worked to take care of his crew and to truly lead. Instead of staying behind to mourn his lost wife, he pressed onward to take part in his destiny. When the women burnt ships, he could have easily left them there to die in vengeance, but instead took the time to help them and the elderly build a town for themselves in which to thrive. He sacrifices much of his life to help fulfill a prophecy, leaving a queen whom he debatably loved behind to commit suicide, crying when she turns from him in the underworld. The speech Euryalus's mother gives to lament her son's death shows the central theme of sacrifice throughout the epic.

His mother's love brought her to care so deeply for Euryalus and to sacrifice so much of her own life for his, but she was not the only one to do so. His father also sacrificed for him by teaching him to fight, which he did proudly alongside Nisus, another person who is known to sacrifice for him. In the competition depicted after Aeneas' father passed, Nisus deliberately trips another man in order to help Euryalus win first place and gain honor and glory. Even in his pain, Nisus sacrifices for Euryalus (Aeneid 5. 425-31). In

The Iliad, there were friends such as these- Achilles and Patroclus, but despite how close they were, Achilles did not sacrifice anything but physical possessions to help his friend. Had he sacrificed his pride and reentered the battle when Patroclus spoke to him about his armor, he would not have died on the battlefield. But this is not the case in The Aeneid, as Virgil sees that humanity in one character can be better exemplified through the love they have for others rather than through themselves.

Many characters in The Aeneid show a great ability to sacrifice for others, namely Euryalus, as shown in his mother's speech. This was not seen in epics before this, but is used to show the humanity in the bonds between parents and their children, and friends with each other. These sacrifices show that martyrdom for a friend is not the only possible sacrifice, but that they all show much about the human soul.