• Overview of *The Aeneid*, Books 3-5
• *The Aeneid*, Book 6
• Overview of *The Aeneid*, Books 7-12
The Aeneid, Books 3-5

• Book 3 of The Aeneid
  – after witnessing the Fall of Troy, Aeneas and his fellow refugees flee in search of a place to settle
  – the Trojans attempt to colonize various lands but always have to leave for some reason
  – at the end of Book 3, Aeneas finishes his narration of his wanderings
The Aeneid, Books 3-5

• Book 4 of The Aeneid
  – Aeneas and Dido fall in love and have an affair
  – but the gods call Aeneas back to his duty, to settle Italy and found the Roman state
  – at the end of Book 4, Dido commits suicide as Aeneas and the Trojans leave
**Vergil**

*The Aeneid, Books 3-5*

- **Book 5 of The Aeneid**
  - unaware of Dido’s fate, Aeneas holds funeral games for his father who has passed away during their wanderings
  - the Trojan women with Aeneas attempt unsuccessfully to force their husbands to settle Sicily by burning the ships there
  - instead, Aeneas sails for Italy but his pilot **Palinurus** falls overboard and dies
The Aeneid, Book 6

- Aeneas and his men land at Cumae on the west coast of Italy where there is an oracle of Apollo
- the priestess of Apollo who lives there is called the Sibyl
- she oversees a temple near a cave which leads to the Underworld
The Aeneid, Book 6

• according to tradition, the temple to Apollo at Cumae was built by Daedalus (Chapter 9.1.B)

• Vergil describes in detail the artwork on the doors of this palace (ecphrasis)

• this artwork depicts the Theseus myth and the path between civilization (Athens) and brutality (Crete)
The Aeneid, Book 6

- note the apostrophe to Icarus (6.30-31), in which Vergil(!) addresses Daedalus’ dead son

- cf. the situation of Aeneas and that of Daedalus whose grief prevents him from finishing the picture of Icarus:
  - a father’s grief vs. a son’s grief
  - an artist’s inability to finish a project he has started (a Vergilian self-reference?)
The Aeneid, Book 6

• note the comparison of Aeneas and Theseus:
  – both sail across sea to face tribulations
  – both enter complex buildings housing monsters
  – both have female helpers: Ariadne/Sibyl
  – both triumph over death and emerge heroes
The Aeneid, Book 6

• to enter the Underworld, the Sibyl orders Aeneas to find and cut down the golden bough

• cf. King Arthur and the sword in the stone

• when Aeneas finally finds it, it only gives way reluctantly, as if the world regrets the coming of Rome
The Aeneid, Book 6

- the elaborate burial of Misenus (6.212-235) serves as a surrogate funeral for Aeneas as he embarks on his literal(!) death journey.

- cf. Priam’s figurative death journey in The Iliad, Book 24:

  Family and friends all followed weeping as though for Priam’s last and deathward ride.
The Aeneid, Book 6

• as Aeneas and the Sibyl begin their “easy” descent to Hades, they first encounter personified abstractions:
  Grief and avenging Cares, … pale Diseases and sad Age, … and Dread and Hunger, … and sordid Want

• cf. Hesiod’s Theogony and Genesis

• it’s as if Aeneas’ death journey were to begin “In the beginning …”
The Aeneid, Book 6

• among the dead who have not yet entered Hades, Aeneas sees Palinurus
• the dead pilot cannot cross the Styx because he has not yet been buried which Aeneas promises to do
• n.b. one dead man waits above while a living man goes below into Hades, cf. Gilgamesh and Enkidu
The Aeneid, Book 6

- at the Styx River, Aeneas sees the boatman Charon
- the Sibyl shows Charon the golden bough and he allows them to cross
- finally, Aeneas and the Sibyl slip past Cerberus by feeding him a dog-treat steeped in a sleeping drug
The Aeneid, Book 6

• once across the Styx, Aeneas sees Dido among the recent dead
• he had only heard rumors of her death and so he is shocked to see her ghost “rising like the moon behind a cloud”
• he begs her to tell him what happened but she stares at the ground “stony-faced” and refuses to say a word
The Aeneid, Book 6

• as he and the Sibyl pass by Tartarus, Aeneas hears the screams of the damned and their tormentors

• though not allowed to enter Tartarus, Aeneas hears what it is like from the Sibyl who has been there before

• this passage inspired the medieval poet Dante to write The Inferno
The Aeneid, Book 6

- past Tartarus lie the Elysian Fields, the idyllic playground of the blessed, a “garden” walled in by the Lethe, the river of forgetfulness

- in this heaven, the souls of good people do whatever they did well in life: sing, dance, fight, philosophize
Vergil’s vision of the afterlife is a mixture of ancient religions and philosophies

- from the Pythagoreans, in particular, he borrowed the idea of reincarnation
- according to Vergil, dead souls wait in Hades until the time assigned for their rebirth (usually a “millennium”)
The Aeneid, Book 6

• then they pass through the Lethe and return to the upper world
• thus, the Romans of Vergil’s day are more than the Trojans’ ancestors
• they *are* the Trojans reborn
  – Augustus is Aeneas?
  – Julius Caesar is Hector?
  – Vergil is Homer?
The Aeneid, Book 6

• when he arrives in the Elysian fields, Aeneas finally meets his father’s soul
• Anchises explains this system of reincarnation
• to illustrate his point, he directs his son’s attention to souls who are preparing for the next life in which they will be Romans, Aeneas’ descendants
The Aeneid, Book 6

- Aeneas watches these future Roman souls parade in a triumph celebrating Roman history-yet-to-be
- among these ghosts of the unborn are Romulus, Remus and Rhea Silvia
- also Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic
The Aeneid, Book 6

- other heroes of the Roman Republic heroes follow, carrying the fasces
- cf. the Mercury head dime
Vergil quickly “recapitulates” the future of Roman history, including the Punic Wars and Rome’s conquest of the East.

- he goes up as far as his own day and Augustus’ rise to supreme power.
The Aeneid, Book 6

at the climax of the parade, Anchises articulates for Aeneas the credo of the Roman state (6.847-853):

Others will cast more tenderly in bronze
Their breathing figures, I can well believe,
And bring more lifelike portraits out of marble;
Argue more eloquently, use the pointer
To trace the paths of heaven accurately
And accurately foretell the rising stars.
The Aeneid, Book 6

at the climax of the parade, Anchises articulates for Aeneas the credo of the Roman state (6.847-853):

Roman, remember by your strength to rule
Earth's people—for your arts are to be these:
To pacify, to impose the rule of law,
To spare the conquered, battle down the proud.
The Aeneid, Book 6

- finally, the “triumph of Rome” ends on a minor chord with a pre-recollection of the recent and untimely death of Marcellus, Augustus’ nephew and adopted son
- it is said that, when Vergil first read this passage in Augustus’ court and Marcellus’ mother realized whom Vergil was talking about, she fainted
The Aeneid, Book 6

- but Book 6 ends on another, far more dissonant “sour note”
- Vergil says that Aeneas and Sibyl leave Hades through the Gate of Ivory
  - true dreams leave by the Gate of Horn
  - false dreams leave by the Gate of Ivory
- are we to understand Aeneas’ vision of “Roman triumph” as a false dream?
The Aeneid, Books 7-12

- the Gate of Ivory is not the only “false note” in The Aeneid
- the last lines of Book 12 ring with the sound of hollow glory just as much as the end of Book 6
- Aeneas murders Turnus in cold blood, becoming a Pyrrhus of sorts, the type of monster he described in Book 2
The Aeneid, Books 7-12

- what is the theme of *The Aeneid*, then?
  - that war and carnage can turn even thinking, pious men into savages?
  - that Rome’s progress is part of the world’s de-evolution into inhuman, bestial brutality?
  - that society inevitably breeds murder?
  - that glory and conquest are just bloody “ivory” dreams?