

Two Modes of Memory in *Aeneid* 1
Aaron M. Seider (University of Chicago)

A goddess' savage attack on the Trojans begins the *Aeneid* and a killing inspired by the flash of a baldrick brings it to an end. These two acts bookend the poem, and each foregrounds the theme of memory. Why does memory warrant such a conspicuous emphasis in Vergil's epic? To begin to answer this question, this paper will focus on how the narrator first introduces the theme of memory in Book 1, a topic largely untreated in the scholarship, which mostly focuses on individual moments concerning memory (e.g. Henry, 1989, *The Vigour of Prophecy*, 149-51; Reed, 2007, *Virgil's Gaze*, 170-1).

Nearly every pivotal action in Book 1 somehow revolves around memory, and the characters interact with memory in two distinct ways. In one mode, exemplified by Juno, memory produces rage and solitary thought; in the other mode, exemplified by Aeneas and Dido, memory holds out the possibility of happiness and encourages the formation of bonds and partnerships.

At the epic's opening, Juno's memory inflames her with a vengeful anger. The narrator prominently reveals this as the reason for Aeneas' toils in the poem's fourth line: *saevae memorem Iunonis ob iram*, and then goes on to further characterize the goddess' memory. When the narrator details just what past events Juno recalls, he highlights the obstinate tenacity of her memory. It is not just her recollection of the Trojan War that fuels her present desire to destroy Aeneas and his men (*veterisque memor Saturnia belli*, 1.23), but earlier incidents, such as Paris' hurtful judgment, also remain lodged in her mind (*manet alta mente repostum*, 1.26). The narrator's characterization of Juno just before her first speech hints that she chooses to hold on to her painful memories: *aeternum servans sub pectore vulnus* (1.36).

A different mode of memory is developed in the speeches of Aeneas and Dido. These characters treat memory as if it holds the potential to offer happiness and a bond. Aeneas tentatively sets forth this notion in a speech to his grieving men upon their landfall in Carthage. He ventures that the Trojans might someday take pleasure in remembering their current troubles (*forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit*, 1.203), but he does not believe his own encouragement: *spem voltu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem* (1.209). Yet shortly thereafter, Aeneas begins to treat memories as if they have a beneficial power. As he looks at scenes from the Trojan War on Juno's temple and takes pleasure in the commemoration of these deeds, he remarks: *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt. / solve metus; feret haec aliquam tibi fama salutem* (1.462-3). This idea that memories may offer safety is further advanced by Dido in her speeches to Aeneas. One of her first offers to form a bond between Trojans and Carthaginians is founded on her memory of childhood stories about the Trojans and on her recall of her own recent troubles: *non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco* (1.630). In Dido's last speech of the book this salutary conception of memory is brought to the fore: she prays to Jupiter that future generations of Trojans and Carthaginians will remember this day: *nostrosque huius meminisse minores* (1.733).

This paper closes by considering the impact of some reservations the narrator sets forth about these two modes of memory. His question, *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* (1.11), suggests that Juno carries her angry memories too far, and the hope Aeneas draws from the temple ekphrasis is undermined by the narrator's revelation that Aeneas *animum pictura pascit inani* (1.464) (Johnson, 1976, *Darkness Visible*, 105). Book 1 ends on a similar note: when Dido imagines future generations remembering the happy day of the Trojans' arrival, the irony is painful and blatant.