

Death *Ante Ora Patrum*: Trojan *Pietas* in Aeneas' First Speech

Aeneas' speech to Dido in *Aeneid* 4 presents Aeneas' *cura* (332) at odds with his *pietas*: a sense of duty and devotion to one's gods, country/state, and family (Pöschl 1977; Johnston 2004). While Aeneas unsurprisingly sides with *pietas* over *cura*—after all, he is *pious* Aeneas, introduced at the beginning of the epic as a man *insignem pietate* (1.10)—his *pietas* does not come easily in the face of his *cura*. As de Grummond remarks, his *pietas* is something he has to “struggle to achieve” (de Grummond 1977). But is this really true? The answer depends on the object of Aeneas' *cura*, or, in other words, his *amor*.

While the most obvious object of his *amor* is Dido, there is another option: Troy. Indeed, although Aeneas mentions nothing of his *amor* for Dido, he tells her that, had he been able to “order [his] *curae* how [he] wished” (*sponte mea componere curas*, 341), he would have already rebuilt Troy (342-44). For Clausen, Aeneas' supreme affinity for Troy indicates that he is “burdened by memory” (Clausen 1966), but there is more to it. In lines 342-44, Aeneas expresses great devotion to Troy and his people, for whom he functions as *pater* throughout the epic—in other words, his family. These sentiments ring of *pietas*. It is not, then, that Aeneas “struggle[s] to achieve” *pietas* in general, for he already possesses it; rather, he struggles to ‘complete’ it, directing it toward the gods, his country/state, and family at the same time. In the case of his *cura* for Dido, Aeneas' struggle is one in which his *amor* and *pietas* are directly opposed. However, in the case of his *cura* for Troy, his *pietas* is split between ‘Trojan’ and ‘Roman,’ between past and future (Otis 1963). This struggle is not so much *for pietas* as it is *of pietas*.

McLeish argues that Aeneas' love for Dido causes “his pursuit of Italy [to] become a burden” (McLeish 1972). While his love for Dido certainly aggravates the burden, it is not his

burden's main cause. In this paper, I contend that Aeneas' Italian destiny is a burden from the beginning of the epic due to his 'Trojan' *pietas*. I have introduced this thesis with a discussion of Aeneas' speech in Book 4 because it is a clear example of Aeneas' 'Trojan' *pietas* revealing itself in his words in the midst of trial—the exact phenomenon that I believe occurs in the beginning of the epic.

Through an extended examination of Aeneas' opening monologue in *Aeneid* 1.94-101 and a comparison of this speech with its Homeric model(s), I argue that the struggle between Aeneas' 'Trojan' *pietas* and 'Roman' *pietas* is visible in his first words in the epic. This struggle is made apparent in Aeneas' wish to have died *ante ora patrum*. I posit, contra Horsfall 2008 and O'Sullivan 2009, that this phrase is not equivalent to the slightly more common Virgilian phrase *ante ora parentum*; rather, it is a stand-in for *ante ora patrum conscriptorum*—in other words, *ante ora senatorum*. I contend that when *patrum* is understood to have a civic emphasis, not a biological one (contra Hight 1972; Galinsky 1992), Aeneas' desire to have died *ante ora patrum* puts *pietas* on full display—not a *pietas* directed towards the SPQR(*omanus*) but, rather, the SPQT(*roianus*). I hope to demonstrate that any deficiency of *pietas* that we may perceive in Aeneas' opening utterances does not necessarily indicate a lack of *pietas*, but a *pietas* misplaced. In other words, even a shortcoming in Aeneas' *pietas* is due to a *pietas* of sorts.

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