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TROY NOVANT: AN EXAMINATION OF AENEAS AS DEPICTED BY GEOFFREY
CHAUCER

By

PETER STEFFENSEN

Under the direction of Robert S. Lightsey, PhD

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways in which historical, cultural, and literary influences have changed the way that Chaucer portrayed Aeneas in both *The Legend of Good Women* and *The House of Fame*. The primary texts looked at in comparison are Ovid's *Heroides*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the historical works of Dares and Dictys. This study concludes that this complex network of forces caused Chaucer to present Aeneas as an overall negative figure in his poetry.

INDEX WORDS: Chaucer, Aeneas, Dido, *Legend of Good Women*, *House of Fame*

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of English
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Georgia State University

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CHAUCER

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DEDICATION
For my Grandfather

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INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry serves as the foundation for centuries of literature that followed him, but he too built upon the ideas of those who came before him. Chaucer's reverence of the classical "auctors" made him particularly susceptible to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historium Regum Britannie*, which borrows content and characters from the works of Homer and Virgil in order to describe the mythical founding of Britain by Aeneas' descendent Brutus. Because of this literary lineage Chaucer owes much to Virgil's *Aeneid*, which had a substantial impact on the literature of the Middle Ages. Thirty-seven manuscripts from medieval England alone survive which contain substantial amounts of Virgil's verse.¹ Even Virgil, however, was building on a tradition that started long before he was born with Homer's works, which would reverberate down the centuries through countless writers such as Chaucer, Dares and Dictys, and Gower.

Chaucer uses Virgil's Aeneas in his *House of Fame* and *Legend of Good Women*, but he radically changes Aeneas' character via substantial alterations from the events of the *Aeneid*. Chaucer primarily concerns himself with the tragic love of Aeneas and Dido, and he uses his doomed romance in order to portray Aeneas as a unfaithful, traitorous figure, whom differs greatly from the altruistic hero seen in the *Aeneid*. Aeneas as a figure, however, predates even Virgil; for the true origin of this literary figure, one must turn to Homer.

Homer's account of the siege of Troy in the *Iliad* has endured aeons, in part because of his ability to capture the beauty of things in simple language which is almost unparalleled to this day. Few could forget dawn's "fingertips of rose" (I. 547) or Sarpedon "clutching the bloody dust" (XVI. 564) during his last moments. This image also alludes to another one of Homer's

¹For further information see Christopher Baswell's *Virgil in Medieval England* p. 285-308.

other great talents: creating unbelievably compelling characters and situations. Homer had a great gift for making his characters come to life through their actions. Achilles is the Achilles that centuries refuse to forget because of his smashing of the speaking stick in Book I, and his chilling oaths of vengeance following Patroclus' death. While Achilles certainly serves as the focal point of the piece, Homer presents other characters just as compelling. Aged Nestor tries to quell the fury of younger men, courageous Hector valiantly defends his home, crafty Odysseus plots and plans, and mighty Diomedes vies with the gods themselves. Homer would also focus on a character that would go on to influence writers for millennia: Aeneas.

While Virgil's portrayal of the Aeneas that founded Rome remains the most relevant in popular imagination, Aeneas' first appearance in western literature is in the *Iliad* where Homer presents him as an ardent defender of Troy. Two traits from Aeneas' first portrayal retain relevance to this Roman project: his prowess in battle and his destiny. Homer demonstrates Aeneas' fighting capabilities when Aeneas stands up to no less than Achilles himself: "son of Peleus, use words to frighten / a small boy, not me. I am well able / to bandy cutting words and insults too" (XX. 231-3). The fight proceeds apace, but Achilles gains the upper hand. Homer then puts to words Aeneas' next trait when Poseidon says concerning Aeneas: "his fate is to escape, / to ensure that the great line of Dardanos / may not unseeded perish from the world" (XX. 344-6). Divine intervention then saves Aeneas' life (a somewhat common occurrence for him). This scene exemplifies a recurring theme in Aeneas' life: his destiny. He is not permitted to die valiantly battling Achilles, an act that would surely bring him great glory; rather, he has to shoulder the burden of his people and put others before himself. Poseidon goes on to say that, "therefore Aeneas and his sons, and theirs, / will be lords over Trojans born hereafter" (XX. 350-1). Even as early as Homer's *Iliad*, then, Aeneas' destiny looms large. Virgil in his *Aeneid* takes

up this specific theme in his portrayal of Aeneas.

When Virgil picked up his pen to add his contribution to the matter of Troy, Homer was long gone and the story itself was indeed an old and venerable one. However, Virgil did not let that dissuade him. Rather, he viewed Homer's legacy as a challenge. As he says: "I sing of warfare, and a man at war / From the sea-coast of Troy in early days / He came to Italy by destiny" (I. 1-3). Here Virgil draws attention to *both* of Homer's subjects—war in the Iliad, and a man at war in the Odyssey. However, Virgil contends that he can do justice to both themes in a single volume. This, then, represents one of the first departures from Homer that would become emblematic of the treatment of Troy matter in later ages. The writers among whom Aeneas' story passed down through generations respected the past material certainly, but did not feel bound by it. Virgil did not shy away adding new details to the story, while keeping certain characterizations the same.

Virgil treats Aeneas's characterization in a manner similar to that of Homer. He continues the showcasing of Aeneas' great might in combat, and of course touches on his destiny. The key change that Virgil makes is of course focusing much more intently on Aeneas' fate and the arrival of the Roman people. To this end, Virgil makes Aeneas the "*pietate virum*" [pious man] (Pharr I.10). Over and over again the gods of Olympus deny Aeneas any kind of narrative resolution. For Virgil, Aeneas is a different kind of hero: cannot die with honor in battle in Book I, he leaves the remnants of the Trojan people that he finds in Book III, and he tragically ends his love affair with Dido in Book IV. While all of these actions cause him suffering and woe, he nonetheless puts on a brave face and commits himself to his destiny. Throughout the *Aeneid*, Virgil portrays Aeneas as a man more concerned with the greater good (from a Trojan/Roman perspective) than any kind of personal happiness. Aeneas completely effaces himself in order to bring about his

destiny, and for that Virgil, at least, thinks he should be commended and celebrated.

A multitude of writers add their own contributions to the Troy matter after Virgil. Some of the more influential writers include the “historians” Dares and Dictys, Ovid, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Guido delle Colonne, Benoit de Sainte-Maure, the anonymous writer of the *Roman d’Eneas*, John Gower, and, of course, Geoffrey Chaucer. All of these writers bring their own concerns to these stories from antiquity. Dares and Dictys aim to provide an accurate “historical” account of Troy (to compliment Homer’s poetic account), Benoit adapted the material into a medieval romance, and Gower uses the characters for moralizing purposes. Chaucer, like the others, adapts the matter to his own time, place, and purpose, and I propose to examine on the historical and cultural influences on Chaucer’s unique portrayal of this often-portrayed hero from antiquity.

Much has been said on the broader subject of classical matter in the middle ages. Domenico Comparetti provides a thorough analysis of Virgil’s influence on the medieval period in his work *Vergil in the Middle Ages* (1966). Christopher Baswell in *Virgil and the Middle Ages* (1995) offers an indispensable look at the ways in which Virgil stayed in the medieval consciousness and how he continued to influence it. C. David Benson provides a fascinating look at the nigh-unrecognizable medieval conception of Troy in *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature* (1980). Sylvia Federico’s *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (2003) looks at the medieval conception of Troy through a blend of historicism and psychoanalysis, while Alex Mueller’s recent work *Translating Troy: Provincial Politics in Alliterative Romance* examines the medieval Troy story through a close study of the more isolated alliterative verse of England’s rural provinces.

Many scholars have also written with a more in depth focus on the classical world’s

influence on Chaucer in particular. Edgar Finley Shannon's *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (1964) offers a critical look at the poets of the ancient world—especially Virgil and Ovid—and how these poets influenced Chaucer. Cathy Hume's *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage* (2012) devotes a chapter to examining mythological romantic relationships of *The Legend of Good Women*. Similarly, Anne McTaggart looks at these ancient romances in several chapters of her work *Shame and Guilt in Chaucer* (2012). My project differs from these works as I will be focusing intently on Aeneas as a single figure, following Chaucer's lead as he goes out of his way to focus on and highlight the character of Aeneas, in order to better understand not only how he frames this otherwise seemingly familiar figure from the Trojan story, but also to understand why he casts him in a different light than that of his predecessors.

Chaucer's career not only provided the occasion for him to acquire and understand the matter of Troy through his association as a servant to the classes for whom the story held the most meaning—after all it would be the Lancasters who would only a few years after his death commission the poet John Lydgate to compose the epic Troy Book—it also demanded of him the ability to read carefully the cultural narratives around him, perceiving nuances in story and social engagement that in all likelihood came to inform his work as a poet.

It is in this seminal moment in his writing career that Chaucer's depiction of Aeneas in *The Legend of Good Women* occurs. He had completed *Troilus and Criseyde* and seemed to have had some reservations about aspects of its contents, for he represents Cupid accusing him of a great crime in the opening of the piece: ““hast thow nat mad in Englysh ek the bok / How that Criseyde Troylus forsok, / In shewyne how that women han don mis?” (G 264-6). Cupid's accusation is essentially that by portraying Criseyde the way that he did, Chaucer has cast a negative light on women as a whole. Cupid's issue seems to have merit, for as Criseyde says:

Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
 Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
 No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
 O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!
 Thoroughout the word my belle shal be ronge!
 And wommen moost wol haten me of all.
 Allas, that swich a cas me sholde fall! (*Troilus and Criseyde* V. 1051-7).

Indeed, if one takes the romantic relationship of *Troilus* as being representative of Chaucer's attitudes toward men and women generally, Chaucer certainly seems to judge Criseyde more harshly than Troilus. While Criseyde suffers the fate outlined above, Troilus enjoys a much better outcome despite his death: “And whan that he was slayn in this manere, / His lighte goost ful blisfully is went / Up to the holughnesse of the eighthe spere” (V. 1807-9). Troilus receives an almost Christian sense of fulfillment in the afterlife, while Criseyde has been left to suffer the judgment of the ages. Chaucer would later touch on doomed love again, but he would try to reverse the roles—man as traitor and women as virtuous lover. Chaucer used the *Aeneid's* tragic romance, and specifically his characterization of Aeneas, to “balance the scales” towards women because of his portrayal of women in *Troilus*.

The Legend of Good Women contains further evidence of Chaucer's authorial purpose in light of *Troilus*. In the prologue of his *Legend*, Alceste commands Chaucer to write, “of goode women, maydenes and wyves, / That were trewe in lovyng al here lyves; / And telle of false men that hem betrayen” (G 474-6). Here, then, is Chaucer's purpose in *Legend*: in order to atone for what he views as his crimes against women in *Troilus*, he will tell tales of the opposite sort. Kathryn L. Lynch, after noting that a “good woman” in Chaucer's time could be viewed as an

academic “impossible,” further notes that, “the counterpart to a 'good woman' is a 'faithful man,' an even rarer species it seems” (*Chaucer's Philosophical Visions* 113). Aeneas' depiction, at least in *Legend*, comes more into focus in light of this binary, for Aeneas necessarily functions as the opposite of the “faithful man” for this project to work. These concepts do not, however, explain Chaucer's use of Aeneas in *The House of Fame*. Chaucer provides a similar portrayal of Aeneas here, when he notes that: “but let us speke of Eneas, / How he betrayed hir, allas, / And lefte hir ful unkyndely” (*House* 293-5). Chaucer's apparent ulterior motive, venerating women because of *Troilus*, makes no sense for this work as it predates *Troilus*. While *The Legend of Good Women* clearly tries to achieve this goal, Chaucer had additional reasons for focusing so intently on Aeneas, and the overall goal of this project is to examine this preoccupation as fully as possible.

In my first chapter I will look at Aeneas through one of the moral measuring sticks of the middle ages: the cardinal virtues. The virtues were an important system for this culture as demonstrated by the ubiquitous *Divine Comedy* of Dante: “each cornice of Sin is described in great detail over two or three cantos. On each cornice the penitents view scenes from history illustrating either horrible examples of those guilty of the Sin, or models who followed the antithetical virtue” (Bloomfield 158). Through a close reading of Chaucer's works in the context of the virtues as outlined by Plato and Cicero I demonstrate that Chaucer explicitly characterizes Aeneas as a man completely devoid of these virtues as they would have been understood in the century after Dante, by an author deeply influenced by the virtues both in literature and life.

Chapter two focuses on the older historical and poetical sources for Chaucer's Aeneas. Ovid's *Heroidies* provides a great deal of the material I analyze. Ovid writes this work as a series of letters from scorned women to their unfaithful lovers, and one section concerns Dido and Aeneas. Dido's scathing characterization of Aeneas' actions serves as a likely source for many of

Chaucer's own derisions of Aeneas. The chapter also looks at the “historical” sources of Dares and Dictys via their portrayals of the traitorous Aeneas. In their “histories” these two writers change many details of the more traditional Trojan War of Homer's *Iliad*, and in doing so they change Aeneas' character in negative ways that would influence Chaucer. Throughout this chapter I attempt to connect both the content of Chaucer's poetry as well as the overall tone of his works back to these ancient sources.

Chapter three examines the more contemporary sources for Chaucer's depictions of Aeneas. Guido delle Collone's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* occupies a large space in this chapter, as his work reinstated many of the narrative changes to the Troy story by Dares and Dictys for the middle ages. This chapter also focuses on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the King's of Britain*, as this work firmly inscribed in the English consciousness the idea of imperial inheritance from Troy.

Throughout this project, I highlight the complexity and multiplicity of the forces that influenced Chaucer, as well as the result of these influences. Chaucer wrote in an age when simply writing about Aeneas at all came bundled with a complex set of cultural, historical, and political motivations and agendas that he necessarily had to traverse in order to tell his tales. The end result of this web of influences is an Aeneas that looks very different to a modern reader.

CHAPTER ONE

Chaucer portrays Aeneas negatively in both *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* and the four cardinal virtues of antiquity, as well as the three heavenly virtues from Christianity, prove to be a solid basis for analyzing Aeneas' character. These virtues passed from Plato to Cicero, and would have been available to Chaucer in the writings of St. Thomas

Aquinas, as well as Dante's highly influential masterpiece: *The Divine Comedy*. The virtues from antiquity continued to influence the medieval world as evidenced by Chaucer's contemporary William Langland, who makes use of them in *The Vision of Piers Plowman*: "and Grace gaf Piers greynes – cardynales vertues, / And sew it in mannes soule, and sithen he tolde hir names" (277-8). Barbara Nolan in her book *Chaucer and the Roman Antique*, offers a succinct explanation of their importance: "justice, together with the other cardinal virtues, prudence, fortitude, and temperance, comprise those virtues regarded by medieval theorists as belonging to the lower part of reason and to life in this world. They are, therefore, those virtues available to pagans without the light of Christianity" (251). Nolan effectively demonstrates in her treatment of Theseus in *The Knight's Tale*, that he possesses these essential pre-Christian virtues. Chaucer, however, depicts Aeneas as lacking all of these virtues. Furthermore, Chaucer's Aeneas also conspicuously lacks the three heavenly virtues of St. Paul, which Chaucer would have had available to him, since, "we may conclude that he had a more accurate as well as a more comprehensive and direct acquaintance with the Vulgate than has hitherto [in 1924] been supposed" (Landrum 100). Plato provides the origin of the four cardinal virtues of antiquity in his *The Republic*, where he attempts to outline the qualities that would be most important for every citizen of his hypothetical city to possess. Cicero recapitulates these virtues in his work *De Officiis*, where he outlines Plato's virtues and explains why they are important to his own time. I rely on the virtues as laid out by these two figures because they represent the clearest explanation of the concept from classical sources.

The concept of the cardinal virtues survived long past the time of Plato or Cicero. However, The Bible adds a few more virtues, and seems to assert their supremacy over the pagan virtues. Chaucer, as a fourteenth-century Christian learned in Latin, would have had ready access

to this original source, and also likely would have privileged these newer virtues over the old. Concern the heavenly virtues, St. Paul asserts “now there remain faith, hope *and* charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (*Vulgate Bible*, 1 Corinthians 13.13). Chaucer makes use of these virtues in further characterizing Aeneas in his works.

Chaucer's propensity towards the cardinal virtues can be seen most clearly in his admiration of Dante Alighieri. Chaucer mentions Dante several times in his poetry, but one particularly illustrative examples exist in his *House of Fame*:

And every turment eke in helle
 Saugh he, which is longe to telle;
 Which whoso willeth for to knowe,
 On Virgile or on Claudian,
 Or Daunte, that hit telle kan. (445-50).

Chaucer refers to these three authors, Virgil, Claudius and Dante, because of their descriptions of the underworld in their poetry in the *Aeneid*, *The Rape of Proserpina*, and *The Divine Comedy* respectively. Chaucer, however, complicates what would be a simple list by merely including Dante with the Latin “auctors,” which suggests a particular reverence on Chaucer's part for the medieval Italian poet. This respect would further manifest itself in Chaucer's use of the cardinal virtues. Chaucer, for example, would have been privy such scenes as the description of the punishment of the lustful: “I learned that those who undergo this torment / are damned because they sinned within the flesh, / subjecting reason to the rule of lust” (V. 37-9). Dante clearly lays out the binary nature of the sins which constitute the ordering principle of the work via “lust” and “reason.” Lust is the character flaw for which one is tortured for all eternity, while its antithesis is reason. Dante did not invent the virtues, but his use of them in his highly influential

poetry would have a major impact on Chaucer's character portrait of Aeneas.

Plato describes bravery (also called courage and fortitude) in book IV of *The Republic*: “this power in the soul, then, this unfailing conservation of right and lawful belief about things to be and not to be feared is what I call and would assume to be courage” (357). In a traditional reading of *The Aeneid*, Aeneas exudes this feature. For example when the Greeks take Troy and all seems lost, Aeneas says to his men, “Come, let us die, / We'll make a rush into the thick of it. / The conquered have one safety: hope for none” (II. 471-3). In that moment, Aeneas adheres to the principle of bravery as set down by Plato. Troy's foundations are burning around him, and Aeneas assumes that the only path left to him is one of an honorable death; his actions when analyzed in that particular moment could be described as “right and lawful.” However, circumstances change when Venus speaks to Aeneas:

Where is your thoughtfulness
 For me, for us? Will you not first revisit
 The place you left your father, worn and old,
 Or find out if your wife, Creusa, lives,
 And the young boy, Ascanius—all these
 Cut off by Greek troops foraging everywhere? (II. 782-7)

Aeneas proceeds to abandon the fight and eventually escapes with his family. By withdrawing because of concern for his family, Aeneas clearly demonstrates that he can reevaluate “things to be and not to be feared” (Plato 357). Death did not frighten him, until he considered what might happen to his loved ones. In this circumstance, the brave action was not to stay and fight, but rather to forgo a death of honor and glory and seek safety elsewhere.

Chaucer, however, frames Aeneas' exile from Troy as another instance of his lack of

virtues. In *The Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer explains that, “and Enyas was charged by Venus / To fleen away, he tok Ascanius, / That was his sone, in his ryght hand and fledde” (940-2). At first glance, it would appear that Chaucer follows *The Aeneid* closely. Aeneas leaves the burning city of Troy with his family, because Venus told him to do so. However, Chaucer uses a few subtle details to call Aeneas' bravery into question. Chaucer chooses his words very carefully in this passage; for example, Chaucer states that Aeneas was charged to “fleen away” and then restates that he “fledde.” By using two forms of the same word within three lines, Chaucer draws attention to Aeneas' retreat. Furthermore, the word “fleen” can mean: “to be inclined to flee, be timid or fearful; to fear or respect” (*MED*). This definition reveals that the word has an inherent cowardly aspect. Chaucer uses this word in order to make clear the “timid or fearful” nature of his Aeneas. Chaucer also says much the same in *The House of Fame*, when Venus, “bad hir sone Eneas flee; / And how he fledde, and how that he / Escaped was from al the pres” (165-7). Chaucer again uses different forms of the word “flee” to call into question Aeneas' bravery.

Chaucer also engages in omission in these passages to denigrate Aeneas' bravery. Chaucer states that: “I coude folwe, word for word, Virgile, / But it wolde lasen al to longe while” (1002-3). These humorous lines reveal an important fact: Chaucer does not intend to write a work as long as *The Aeneid*. As a matter of course, he must omit certain details in order to tell as much of the story as he can in his given space. However, some of the details that Chaucer chooses to leave out greatly impact the reader's perception of Aeneas. For example when Chaucer describes Aeneas fleeing, he chooses not to inform the reader that Aeneas had attempted to fight prior to his retreat evidenced by his speech to his men as Troy burns:

You defend

A city lost in flames. Come, let us die,
We'll make a rush into the thick of it.

The conquered have one safety: hope for none. (II. 470-3)

Instead, Chaucer focuses on other details. For example, he describes King Priam of Troy being killed during the sacking of Troy “and al the contre was so lowe ybrought, / And Priamus the kyng fordon and nought” (939-40). The king himself dies in defense of his homeland, but Aeneas, the ostensible hero of Troy, flees. By including this detail in such close proximity to Aeneas running from the city, Chaucer invites the reader to draw a comparison between the bravery of elder King of Troy and the perceived cowardice of the fleeing Aeneas.

Cicero in *De Officiis* offers another idea concerning bravery: “So then, not those who do injury but those who prevent it are to be considered brave and courageous” (67). Aeneas as depicted by Chaucer certainly does not embody this form of bravery. This point becomes clearer when Dido beseeches Aeneas to stay with her: “I am with childe, and yeve my child his lyf! / Mercy, lord! Have pite in youre thought! / But al this thing avayleth hire ryght nought” (1323-6). Clearly, Aeneas fails to take pity on Dido in this passage, but it would be more difficult to argue that he causes her injury from just these lines. However, Chaucer provides an interesting detail: “a cloth he lafte, and ek his sworde stondynge, / Whan he from Dido stal in hire slepyng” (1332-3). Aeneas, mindfully or not, leaves his sword beside the suicidal Dido. This detail exists in the *Aeneid*, but Virgil does not dwell on it; Chaucer, however, uses it to further question Aeneas' bravery. The final jab that Chaucer takes at Aeneas' bravery occurs when, “upon the fir of sacryfice she sterte, / And with his swerd she rof hyre to the herte” (1349-50). Not only does Aeneas irresponsibly leave his sword with Dido, but she actually ends up using it to end her life. While Aeneas might not have killed her with his own hands, he certainly, according to Chaucer,

did not “prevent” her fatal “injury.”

Chaucer seeks to remove from Aeneas more than bravery, however, as justice also plays a role in Chaucer's characterization of Aeneas, as Chaucer's Aeneas treats Dido in such a way as to explicitly deprive his actions of any sense of justice. Cicero offers a definition of justice: “the first office of justice is to keep one man from doing harm to another, unless provoked by wrong” (23). According to this definition, Aeneas comes across as an unjust figure in Chaucer's works. For example, after delivering a many lined indictment of Aeneas' potential departure, the outcome remains that, “Al hir compleynt ne al hir moon, / Certeyn, avayleth hir not a stre” (*House* 362-3). Rather than failing to keep another from harming Dido, Aeneas fails to keep himself from harming her. Chaucer further draws attention to Aeneas' callous behavior in this passage via the difference in speech between the two figures. Dido delivers an eloquent complaint spanning dozens of lines that calls attention to general relationships between men and women and her own plight. Conversely, Chaucer does not allow Aeneas to even speak for himself. The reader receives a second hand authorial summary of Aeneas' actions, which basically suggests apathy on Aeneas' part. Through this passage, Chaucer demonstrates that Dido understands justice in a way that Aeneas does not.²

Justice means more than preventing harm, however. Plato offers another definition of justice that deals with the concept of property: “the having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself would admittedly be justice” (371). While Aeneas does not literally steal anything in either of the poems, Chaucer does point a severe deficiency in his gift exchanging ability. Among many other things Aeneas is spared:

Ne stede, for the justing wel to gon,

² For a differing view on Chaucer's portrayal of female morality (with a focus on Criseyde, but with implications for Dido) see Anne McTaggart's *Shame and Guilt in Chaucer* and “Shamed Guiltless: Criseyde, Dido, and Chaucerian Ethics.”

Ne large palfrey, esy for the nones,
 Ne jewel, fretted ful of ryche stones,
 Ne sakkes ful of gold, of large wyghte,
 Ne ruby non, that shynede by nyghte
 Ne gentil hawtein faucoun heroner,
 Ne hound for hert or wilde bor or der,
 Ne coupe of gold, with floreyns newe yebete,
 That in the land oof Libie may be gete,
 That Dido ne hath it Eneas ysent; (*Legend* 1115-24)

Dido offers him all of these lavish gifts as a just gift. In response, Aeneas offers, “both sceptre, clothes, broches, and ek rynges, / Some for to were, and some to presente / To hire that alle these noble thynges hym sente” (*Legend* 1131-3). Chaucer provides no ornate descriptions for Aeneas' gifts; his gifts come across as comparatively plain. Chaucer gives Dido's gifts a full seven lines, each gift receiving its own descriptive line, while he relegates all of Aeneas' gifts to a single line. Chaucer also calls to mind his earlier lines by ending Aeneas' gift list with, “all these noble thynges hym sente.” This line acts as a further indictment of Aeneas by drawing further attention to the difference in their gifts. By having Aeneas fail to understand the value of Dido's gifts, Chaucer demonstrates his lack of justice, which furthers Chaucer's portrayal of Aeneas as a villain.

Aeneas' poor understanding of the ritual of gift giving does not represent his worst misunderstanding of justice. Chaucer offers an example of Aeneas' justice-related indiscretions with more profound consequences when he relates:

And as a fals lovere so wel can pleyne,

That sely Dido rewede on his peyne,
 And tok hym for husbonde and becom his wyf
 For everemo, whil that hem last lyf. (*Legend* 1236-9)

Chaucer puts emphasis on the fact that the marriage of Dido and Aeneas has validity by offering these lines in the mouth of the narrator. While in the original story, the marriage can be viewed as somewhat suspect, here Chaucer makes it clear that Aeneas and Dido have been married “whil that hem last lyf.” While Chaucer uses the “fals love” image as a metaphor for Dido's actions, its placement also lends the image to Aeneas' future actions. Aeneas will deprive Dido of a marriage that, according to Chaucer, is rightfully hers. This failure to adhere to a marriage promise calls Aeneas' sense of justice into further question.

While Chaucer devotes many lines to demonstrating Aeneas' lack of justice, he writes Aeneas as to show his lack of temperance. Cicero offers this definition of temperance: “it embraces also temperance, complete subjection of all passions, and moderation in all things” (97). According to the ancients, a virtuous person masters their emotions and controls them, rather than bearing them for the world to see. Chaucer's Aeneas understandably fails to control his emotions in this passage:

“Allas, that I was born!” quod Eneas;
 “Thourghout the world oure shame is kid so wyde,
 Now it is peynted upon every syde.
 We, that weren in prosperite,
 Been now desclandred, and in swich degre,
 No lenger for to lyven I ne kepe.”
 And with that word he brast out for to wepe

So tenderly that routhe it was to sene. (*Legend* 1027-34)

Aeneas' outburst seems appropriate to this context. Upon being shown a painted representation of his former homeland he simply cannot contain his emotion. However, Cicero makes clear that “all passions” need to be controlled for one to be virtuous. Aeneas not only breaks down and laments his loss through emotional words, but he goes so far as to weep. Chaucer chooses to dwell on this outburst of emotion in order to highlight Aeneas' lack of temperance and continue his depiction of Aeneas as lacking the essential elements of virtue.

Aeneas also fails to moderate himself “in all things.” For example, when he arrives at Carthage, Chaucer's words fail to describe the feast: “What nedeth yow the feste to describe? / He nevere beter at ese was in his lyve” (*Legend* 1098-9). While most readers would likely not begrudge Aeneas a feast after his experiences at sea, he nevertheless engages in behavior contrary to the ideals of temperance. Chaucer puts emphasis on this behavior by omission. Dido presents a feast so grand, that the reader's imagination can picture it better than any words. Chaucer later states that, “this Eneas is come to paradys” (*Legend* 1103). Aeneas' current state presents such an image of indulgence that his state becomes almost Edenic in nature. Aeneas' failure to moderate his desires represents another failure on his part to uphold the cardinal virtues.

Aeneas' lack of wisdom also factors into Chaucer's effort to represent him negatively. Cicero offers a succinct definition of this important cardinal virtue: “we must not treat the unknown as known and too readily accept it; and he who wishes to avoid this error (as all should do) will devote both time and attention to the weighing of evidence” (19-21). Cicero's point comes through clearly: a wise person does not make hasty decisions; rather one needs to examine all particulars of a given situation to make informed choices. This precept gains importance in

respect to the gravity of the situation. Aeneas clearly makes a questionable decision in Chaucer's view when Aeneas informs Dido of his reason for departure:

“Certes,” quod he, 'this nyght my faderes gost
 Hath in my slep so sore me tormented,
 And ek Mercurye his message hath presented
 That nedes to the conquest of Ytale
 My destine is sone for to sayle; (*Legend 1295-9*)

Up to this point, Chaucer has been careful to call into question the divine elements of the story. For example, he questions the validity of Venus making Aeneas invisible (I can nat seyn if that it be possible [*Legend 1020*]) and he does the same concerning Cupid's enchanting of Dido (Be as be may, I take of it no cure [*Legend 1145*]). Chaucer clearly wishes to plant seeds of doubt concerning the divine elements of Aeneas' dream as well. He does not need to tell the reader directly, as in the other two cases, but he has already conditioned the reader to doubt the overt power of the Roman pantheon in his rendition of the story. In this context, Aeneas' justification for leaving Dido comes across as both hasty and foolish. Chaucer turns Aeneas' divine mission into a flimsy excuse in order to call into question Aeneas' wisdom, which further degrades his overall character.

Chaucer effectively demonstrates that Aeneas lacks the cardinal virtues of antiquity, but he also writes Aeneas as to deny him the Christian virtues from St. Paul. Taking away faith from Aeneas proves a strange move on Chaucer's part. The *Aeneid* names Aeneas early on as the “*pietate virum*” [pious man] (Pharr I.10), and Aeneas' piety becomes a central theme for the work as a whole. Chaucer, however, has different intentions for Aeneas. The above argument for the downplaying of the divine element of the story, also applies to faith. Aeneas cannot be pious

or faithful if he does not follow what to Chaucer would be the only true religion. Rather, Chaucer effectively turns the conflict of Aeneas' departure the *Aeneid*—religious piety or romantic love,³ his divine mission or his personal happiness—into a simple matter of Aeneas abandoning Dido for selfish reasons completely divorced from true faith. Throughout his retellings of the *Aeneid*, Chaucer engages in Euhemerism, whereby he attempts to explain pagan miracles and divine figures via natural phenomenon that a Christian audience would find more palatable. Even removing the Euhemeristic tendencies of Chaucer from this interpretation, Chaucer still makes Aeneas appear unfaithful by comparison. Aeneas meets Dido in this way: “whan Eneas was come unto that place, / Unto the mayster temple of al the toun / Ther Dido was in hire devocyoun” (*Legend* 1015-7). Aeneas breaks the very pious act of Dido's temple visit in order to complain about his situation. When placed side by side, Dido appears to be the faithful and Aeneas comes across as a person with no scruples regarding interrupting a holy service. In this manner, Chaucer effectively turns the “*pietate virum*” into a man with no piety or faith.

Chaucer further shows Aeneas lack of virtue by drawing attention to Aeneas' emotional outbursts in order to demonstrate his lack of the virtue Hope. Upon arriving to Carthage, Aeneas voices this complaint to Dido: “‘Allas, that I was borne' quod Eneas / . . . 'No lenger for to lyven I ne kepe.' / And with that word he brast out for to wepe” (*Legend* 1027, 32-3). Chaucer makes Aeneas appear completely hopeless in his current situation, even going so far as to make Aeneas curse his own life twice in one piece of dialog. While Aeneas does weep during this sister scene in the *Aeneid*, the tone is markedly different from Chaucer's version:

He said, “what region of the earth, Achates,

Is not full of the story of our sorrow?

Look, here is Priam. Even so far away

³ For an extended look at the complexities of romantic love in Chaucer, see Sherwin.

Great valor has due honor; they weep here
 For how the world goes, and our life that passes
 Touches their hearts. Throw off your fear. This fame
 Insures some kind of refuge.” (I. 624-31)

In the original tale, Virgil presents Aeneas as quite sad, but hopeful still. Aeneas does not bemoan his own life, rather he does his best to present a hopeful face to the people he leads in the hopes that he can lead them to a better situation. Chaucer eschews the hopeful attitude of Aeneas in this scene in order to deprive Aeneas of yet another virtue.

St. Paul devotes more lines to charity than the other two heavenly virtues. In fact, charity is the only virtue that he provides a definition for: “Charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (*Vulgate Bible*, 1 Corinthians 13.4-7). Chaucer's Aeneas breaks a startling number of the above tenets. For example, when Aeneas relates his dream vision of Mercury, Dido asks: “Have ye nat sworn to wyve me to take? / Allas, what woman wole ye of me make?” (1304-5). Aeneas here acts “perversely,” in that he uses Dido for his lust and then abandons her. This abandonment also speaks to one of the principle characteristics that Aeneas lacks in Chaucer's version of the tale: pity. Pity (related to charity) would seem to be the one thing that could take Aeneas away from the Rome project. Chaucer presents Dido as such a sympathetic character, that Aeneas' abandonment of her comes across as villainous. Aeneas' reason for leaving Dido, founding Rome, further removes him from any notion of charity. Chaucer depicts Aeneas as a “puffed up,” “ambitious” figure who would gladly desert Dido to further his own ends. His reasons come

across as especially ridiculous in Chaucer's version of the story, when one considers Chaucer's Euhemeristic ideas towards the Roman gods. Aeneas' mission, particularly when lacking any divine impetus, does not justify his actions in Chaucer's eyes. Aeneas, in turn, lacks that most important of the heavenly virtues: charity.

CHAPTER TWO

While Chaucer presents an original interpretation of Aeneas's virtues, he was not the first or the last person to engage with these characters. The Dido and Aeneas tragic love story has captivated the imagination of its readers since its inception. Varied authors throughout the ages have even tried their own hand at retelling the story themselves. These versions often contain variances that drastically alter the tone and feel of the story. Chaucer would have had access to these alternative *Aeneids*, and their changes to the story likely influenced Chaucer's own versions of the tale. The story changed each time it switched hands through the centuries, and Chaucer inherits this old tradition while changing details to suit his purposes.

The writers Dares of Phrygia and Dictys of Crete also participate in changing Aeneas' character. However, their influence is distinct from Virgil and Ovid, as Dares and Dictys are ostensibly "historians" rather than poets. They attempted to sort through the poetics of the other writers concerned with Troy and deliver the facts. The historical accuracy of their claims is suspect to say the least, but it would be hard to deny the influence that they had on subsequent writers including Chaucer.

Virgil's original starts the chain of influence that eventually reaches Chaucer in the fourteenth century. Chaucer would have had access to this text in his own time because of his Latin education: "from the late-classical period onward, Virgil was among the most frequently

mined sources for examples of elegant Latinity. At almost any period, and in almost any educational center of the Middle Ages, a student of grammar and rhetoric would gain an intimate knowledge of great swaths of Virgil's text, even barring any direct contact with Virgilian manuscripts" (Baswell 33). Chaucer, therefore, even if not intimately familiar with the Latin text itself, would have certainly known the key elements of the story. Put another way: "the names of the chief writers of Antiquity, like those of the chief grammarians, were so impressed upon children at school, that when they grew up, if they interested themselves at all in literature, they could not lose these early reminiscences of that Latin language in which they wrote" (Comparetti 79). Therefore, even the distinctly English writing Chaucer could not have helped but be influenced by the Latin authors that assisted his early grammar training. There he likely would have encountered the classics through:

anthologies and miscellanies containing extracts and purple passages, with or without authorship attributions, annotation and glosses. Characteristic of such manuscripts is Bodleian Library MS Auct. F. 1. 17, with extracts from Virgil, Ovid, Prudentius, Alan of Lille and the twelfth-century rhetoricians Geoffrey of Vinsauf . . . and Matthew of Vendôme. (Pearsall 32).

Chaucer certainly knew enough Virgil (though perhaps through an intermediary), to retell part of the *Aeneid* more than once. Under the assumption that Chaucer would have likely been more familiar with the key sections of the Latin original—such as the interactions with Dido in Carthage and his departure—I direct most attention towards those sections.

Throughout the *Aeneid*, Virgil draws attention to the arduousness of Aeneas' journey. For example, when describing the difficulties of the Roman project in the opening, Virgil notes that, "for years / They wandered as their destiny drove them on / From one sea to the next: so hard

and huge / A task it was to found the Roman people” (I. 46-9). Virgil points out the sheer amount of time that this journey actually took, but he also places emphasis on the perils inherent in it. However, this journey ends in, what for Virgil certainly, was the most desired outcome possible: the founding of the city of Rome. Virgil also makes apparent the impetus to undergo these harsh trials: destiny. Aeneas does not get to choose his own fate;⁴ rather, he is inexorably bound to the course of events that the Fates have laid out for him. One might imagine that a man in his position would be resentful and angry at the gods for forcing him to endure such trials, but Aeneas rises above such temptations.

Immediately following a rousing speech in which Aeneas encourages men on the brink of despair, Virgil notes: “so ran the speech. Burdened and sick at heart, / He feigned hope in his look, and inwardly / Contained his anguish” (I. 284-6). This, then, is the Aeneas of the *Aeneid*: a man that gives absolute commitment to the greater good (from his perspective). Rather than despair with his men, as he apparently wishes to, he puts on a brave face and cheers them up as much as possible for the challenges ahead. Pious Aeneas knows that his suffering is necessary for something greater than himself, and he puts aside all personal desire, all temptations to break down and give up, in order to achieve the destiny of his people.

Chaucer, however, glosses over many of the specifics of Aeneas’ journey.⁵ He does outline the destruction of Troy and Aeneas’ departure, but following that he states: “but of his adventures in the se / Nis nat to purpos for to speke of here, / For it acordeth nat to my matere” (*Legend* 953-5). Chaucer omits the chronological story of Aeneas to his meeting with Dido; by doing so, he leaves out many of the crucial elements of the struggles of Aeneas and his men.

Chaucer’s purpose for doing so depends on his own “purpos,” which he defines: “but as I seyde,

⁴ For an extended look at fortune as it relates to morality in Chaucer, see J. Allan Mitchel’s “Romancing Ethics in Boethius, Chaucer, and Levinas: Fortune, Moral Luck, and Erotic Adventure.”

⁵ For a study examining a medieval author purposely omitting parts of a classical text, see Nancy P. Pope’s “The Aeneid and the Roman d’Eneas: A Medieval Translator at Work.”

of hym and of Dido / Shal be my tale, til that I have do” (*Legend* 956-7). Chaucer’s purpose, then, is not to give a full account of the *Aeneid*, but rather to adhere to the plan carefully laid out in the prologue of *The Legend of Good Women*. This plan dictates that Chaucer must make Aeneas the “unfaithful man” that abandons the “good woman” Dido, even if the overall story loses much of the complexity of the original tragedy in the process.

Virgil also pays careful attention to the divine elements of his narrative. One prominent example occurs early in the narrative when Jupiter clearly states: “for these I set no limits, world or time, / But make the gift of empire without end” (I. 374-5) The importance of this passage does not relate exactly to the specifics of Jupiter’s words (he simply outlines the Roman project clearly), but rather to the fact that Virgil explicitly has Jupiter say these words first hand. Jupiter (and the rest of the Roman pantheon) exist without a doubt in the pages of the *Aeneid*. They can even intervene directly in matters, such as when Venus makes Aeneas invisible to enter Carthage safely (I. 562-7) or when Cupid enchants Dido to love Aeneas (I. 980-5). These events just happen without question in the *Aeneid*, a testament to Virgil’s own faith in the veracity of the Roman pantheon.

Chaucer—as discussed partially in the preceding section—skirts the issue of the veracity of the gods. The most prominent example of this act occurs after Aeneas enters Carthage unaccosted: “I can nat seyn if that it be possible, / But Venus hadde hym maked invisible” (*Legend* 971-2). Chaucer needs Aeneas to be invisible (or at least unnoticed), because the plot structure requires this to happen, but he does not want to accept the veracity of the gods as such. Similarly, when Cupid enchants Dido, Chaucer simply states: “but, as of that scripture, / Be as be may, I take of it no cure” (*Legend* 1144-5). Again, Chaucer avoids the issue entirely, by feigning noninvolvement. His decision to undercut the divine elements of the original does have

significant implications for the narrative however. Without the divine impetus to complete his journey Aeneas really has no excuse to abandon Dido. In light of this lack of divine destiny, the Rome project becomes his own personal wish, rather than a divinely ordained journey. Chaucer does touch on the idea of his destiny briefly, when he states: “and to the se ful faste he gan him hye, / And sayleth forth with al his companye / Toward Ytyle, as wolde his destinee” (*Legend* 950-2). Removed of the will of the gods, “destinee” seems to mean less any kind of ordained fate, and more the way that the story plays out. For Chaucer, Aeneas’ “destiny” is to sail to Italy because Virgil wrote the story that way. Chaucer does not hesitate to change minor details, but he leaves alone large ones that constitute the human narrative of the story. Using this method, Chaucer’s main inheritances from Virgil are the basic characters and actions of the story. Chaucer deviates from Virgil radically in terms of tone, style, theme, and minor actions.

Ovid tells his own version of the Dido and Aeneas story in his *Heroides*,⁶ which Chaucer uses as a model for his own tales. Ovid puts his own spin on Virgil’s tale; whereas Virgil usually maintains a degree of high seriousness in his poetry, Ovid tends to subvert seriousness for comedic or parodic effect. In this light, Ovid bears remarkable resemblance to Chaucer in writing style. As Edgar Finley Shannon put it: “Chaucer’s greatest obligation is to Ovid. From this ancient Roman far more than from any other poet he drew his inspiration as well as his great store of classical and mythological information” (*Chaucer and the Roman Poets* xiv). This resemblance becomes clearer when considering the similarities between their respective masterpieces, the *Metamorphoses* and *The Canterbury Tales*. Both works are large collections of tales that are interconnected through a complex framing device. More importantly, however, both poets do not shy away from condemning the hypocrisy of institutions deeply embedded in

⁶For an in depth examination of the Dido of Chaucer and Gower as derived from Virgil and Ovid, see Götz Schmitz’s “Gower, Chaucer, and the Classics: Back to the Textual Basics.”

their respective cultures. Just as Ovid loudly proclaims the hypocrisy inherent in the Athena's transformation of Arachne into a spider, Chaucer points to the problems with certain church institutions in "The Summoner's Tale" or "The Friar's Tale."

Ovid's *Heroides* bears particular importance for this project, as Chaucer opens "The Legend of Dido" with this statement:

Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan,
 Be to thy name! and I shal, as I can,
 Folwe thy lantern, as thow gost byforn,
 How Eneas to Dido was forsworn.
 In thyn Eneyde and Naso wol I take
 The tenor, and the grete effects make. (*Legend* 924-9)

Chaucer could not have opened this poem in a more Ovidian fashion. He loudly proclaims that he will follow the great Virgil's story, but right at the end he almost sneaks in the fact that he will (for the most part) be following Naso's, or Ovid's, account of these events. The actions of the story do indeed originate from "Virgil Mantoan," but Chaucer's account owes almost all of its "tenor" and "grete effects" to Ovid rather than Virgil.

Likewise, Chaucer's ending reveals much about his debt to Ovid: "But as myn auctour seith, yit thus she seyde; / Or she was hurt, byforen or she deyde, / She wrote a letter anon that thus began" (1352-4). Chaucer's "auctour" in this case really should be the originator of this tragic romance, Virgil. However, Chaucer makes clear his indebtedness to Ovid by his inclusion of the word "letter." He includes an epistle from Dido to Aeneas that she writes just before the end of her life.⁷ No such letter appears anywhere in Virgil; in his account, Dido takes her own

⁷Dido's attempt to preserve the memory of her grief via the letter has implications in a Boethian philosophical context that are outside the scope of this essay. For an account of how such ideas might operate, see Brooke Hunter's "Remnants of Things Past: Memory and the *Knight's Tale*."

life and the reader hears no more of her until Aeneas descends to the underworld. Ovid's whole text, however, is just such a letter. Ovid frames the *Heroides* itself as a series of complaints of scorned lovers to their jilters, which bears striking resemblance to Chaucer's own *Legend* project.

Chaucer's version of the letter itself also owes much to Ovid:

“Ryght so,” quod she, “as that the white swan
 Ayens his deth begynnyth for to synge,
 Right so to yow make I my compleynyng.
 Not that I trowe to geten yow ageyn,
 For wel I wot that it is al in veyn,
 Syn that the goddes been contraire to me.
 But syn my name is lost thourgh yow,” quod she,
 “I may wel lese on yow a word or letter,
 Al be it that I shal ben nevere the better;
 For thilke wynd that blew youre ship away,
 The same wynd hath blowe away youre fey.” (*Legend* 1355-65).

Again, none of this appears in Virgil's original. Dido certainly makes complaints against Aeneas in the *Aeneid* itself, but all of these are in dialogue or monologue. A version of her woes originates in Ovid's version of the tale in the form of a letter to Aeneas, which goes:

Here is Dido's swan song: when you've read
 My last words, Aeneas, I'll be dead.
 Thus when her time has come, abject upon
 The riverbank laments the silver swan.

I do not have a hope that you'll be moved
 By prayers the god of love has disapproved,
 But, having lost my honor, all I had,
 The waste of a few words seems not so bad. (*Ovid's Heroines* "Dido to Aeneas"
 1-8)

Chaucer almost wholesale lifts Ovid's opening into his own piece. The stunning metaphor of Dido as the dying swan, the callous nature of the god of love, and the epistle conceit itself, are all taken straight from Ovid's text. Chaucer uses this letter to bridge the gap between his tale and Ovid's. The last lines of Chaucer's text are: "but who wol al this letter have in mynde, / Rede Ovyde, and in hym he shal fynde" (1366-7). Ending the piece with Ovid, rather than Virgil, further solidifies the congenial relationship of Chaucer and Ovid. In fact, Chaucer last mentions Virgil at all when he notes: "I coude folwe, word for word, Virgile, / But it wolde lasten al to longe while" (1002-3). Following Virgil word for word would "lasten al to long while," but he does not hesitate to devote most of his ending stanza to working Ovid's material into his story. Clearly, Chaucer's "auctour" of choice is indeed Ovid, rather than Virgil. Ending his tale with Ovid's opening also serves as a sort of bridge between the two. Chaucer positions his piece as a prequel of sorts to Ovid's own. Crucial details from Ovid, then, bear significant importance to Chaucer.

One of the key changes from Virgil to Ovid is narrative voice. Virgil assumes an epic narrative voice that attempts impartiality. For example, Virgil takes great pains to make clear that Aeneas does not wish to leave Dido. Following her appeal to him, Virgil notes: "She ended there. / The man by Jove's command held fast his eyes / And fought down the emotion in his heart" (IV. 455-7). As a third person omniscient narrator, Virgil shows the reader both Dido and

Aeneas' sorrow. Neither of the two wishes for events to unfold as they did. Virgil further shows just how many directions fate and desire pull Aeneas:

If Fate permitted me to spend my days
 By my own lights, and make the best of things
 According to my wishes, first of all
 I should look after Troy and the loved relics
 Left me of my people. Priam's great hall
 Should stand again: I should have restored the tower
 Of Pergamum for Trojans in defeat (IV. 469-475)

In a moment of emotional distress, Aeneas exhibits that for all of his stoicism, he remains a man with his own wishes and desires. If not for his preordained fate, he would be capable of pursuing the restoration of his ancestral home. One might assume from this assertion that Aeneas has no sympathy for Dido, but his speech in this section seems to be an uncontrollable outburst of emotion. He ends his entreaty with: “So please, no more / Of these appeals that set us both afire. / I sail for Italy not of my own free will” (IV. 497-9). Virgil as epic narrator has the ability to show the reader the complex mental state of Aeneas, but he also goes to great pains to portray Dido's pain:

During all this she been watching him
 With face averted, looking him up and down
 In silence, and she burst out raging now:
 “No goddess was your mother. Dardanus
 Was not the founder of your family.” (IV. 500-504)

By giving voice to both Dido and Aeneas, Virgil tries his best to tell both sides of this tragedy. In

doing so, the story comes across as a tragedy of necessity. Aeneas did not want to leave Dido, and Dido wishes for him to stay as well. The gods, however, decreed that Aeneas had to leave, and he had no choice but to obey. The tragic element of the story comes across as a result of human desire in the face of inexorable destiny.

Ovid, however, focuses solely on Dido's side of the story, by having Dido herself narrate her story in the form of her letter to Aeneas. By having the story told from the point of view of the emotionally distraught Dido, Ovid significantly changes the tone of the work. For example:

But when you've found it, who will give you, then,

Her land to be exploited by strange men?

Another love? Another Dido? Yet

Other engagements, which you will forget? (“Dido to Aeneas” 18-21).

Ovid makes clear in these lines that Dido feels forlorn and abandoned. The key difference between Dido's emotional state from Virgil to Ovid, however, is the degree to which Dido controls the text. Virgil clearly tried to give ample opportunity for both primary characters to speak their mind. Conversely, Ovid has Dido's thoughts permeate the text; her thoughts as epistle compose the very text itself. In doing so, Ovid relegates Aeneas' side of the story to mere back story. The reader needs to understand Aeneas' role in order to make full sense of the narrative as he presents it, but Aeneas never actually speaks in this text. Rather, all of his actions and thoughts are filtered through Dido, who of course brings her own thoughts and feelings into the equation. The message of Ovid's text, then, is necessarily Pro-Dido and anti-Aeneas because of its method of composition.

Chaucer also takes his tonal cue from Ovid. Throughout Chaucer's “Legend of Dido,” he privileges Dido's perspective while keeping Aeneas in the margins. This point becomes apparent

when considering these words from Aeneas:

“Allas that I was born!” quod Eneas;
 “Thourhout the world oure shame is kid so wyde,
 Now it is peynted on every syde.
 We, that weren in prosperite,
 Been now desclandred, and in swich degre,
 No lenger for to lyven I ne kepe.”
 And with that word he brast out for to wepe
 So tenderly that routhe it was to sene. (1027-1034).

Chaucer chooses to focus solely on Aeneas' outburst during this crucial section. Aeneas has just seen the painting in Carthage that depicts the actions of the Trojan War, and he weeps as Chaucer has described. In Virgil, this section is followed by a lengthy disquisition on the actions of the Trojan War (I. 632-72) as depicted by the wall, including his own single combat with Achilles (I. 665-6). However, more importantly, Virgil does not end Aeneas' voice there. Aeneas goes on to discuss matters with Dido at some length, and Virgil allows Aeneas to tell his own story in the subsequent book of the text. Chaucer, however, ends Aeneas' voice with the above quote. Those lines are actually the final things that Aeneas says at all in the tale. So limited Aeneas' voice, Chaucer follows Ovid by pushing Aeneas to the outer edges of the story.

Chaucer takes this narrative tone from Ovid, but he makes it even more pejorative. Whereas, Dido provides the narrative voice of “Dido to Aeneas,” Chaucer as narrator fills this role in the “The Legend of Dido.” Throughout the work, he uses this narrative voice to influence the tone of the story. For example, in describing the qualities of Aeneas that Dido finds attractive, Chaucer relates: “And saw the man, that he was **lyk** a knyght, / And suffisaunt of

persone and of myght, / And lyk to been a verray gentil man” (*Legend* 1066-8, my emphasis). Chaucer uses his narrative voice to call into question the very things that Dido likes about Aeneas. Rather, than taking an impartial tone (like Virgil), or letting Dido voice her own thoughts (like Ovid), Chaucer uses narrative authority to *inform* the reader about the facts of things. For Chaucer Aeneas may have been “lyk” a knight, but he clearly fell short of both that ideal and the ideal of the “verray gentil man.” Chaucer’s narratorial shaping of the tone and style does not end there, however. Chaucer also notes that: “And wel his wordes he besette can, / And hadde a noble visage for the nones, / And formed wel of braunes and of bones” (1069-71). Again, Chaucer’s narrative voice turns Aeneas’ positive traits into negative or perhaps even deceptive traits. Aeneas “besettes” his words well, which can mean to employ or allocate (*MED*). So Aeneas, in a manner that calls to mind the crafty Odysseus, “employs” his words well. Given the later events of the tale, Chaucer clearly calls into question the veracity of Aeneas’ speech here. The line following is even more damning of Aeneas. By saying that Aeneas had a “noble visage for the nones,” Chaucer means that Aeneas had a trustworthy countenance “for the particular occasion or purpose” (*MED*). Aeneas, apparently, tailors his facial expressions to suit individual situations. For the sake of self-interest, he needs Dido trust him, so he simply employs his “noble visage.” Chaucer makes clear that Aeneas in his tale is not a man to be trusted, but he does so in such a remarkable manner. By using descriptions of Aeneas’ ostensibly positive character traits to denigrate him, Chaucer demonstrates his Ovidian talent for parody and poking fun. To top off this description, Chaucer notes that Aeneas is, “formed wel of braunes and of bones,” as if to say, “if nothing else he looks nice despite his underhanded nature.”

Chaucer goes on to say: “And wel a lord he **semede** for to be” (*Legend* 1074, my emphasis), which again calls into question the veracity of Aeneas’ outer appearance. However,

while Chaucer as narrator seems acutely aware of Aeneas' future treachery, Dido appears enamored with him:

Anon hire heart hath pite of his wo
 And with that pite love com in also;
 And thus, for pite and for gentillesse,
 Refreshed moste he been of his distresse. (1079-82)

Pity plays an important role in this section. As noted above, the final direct speech that Aeneas has in the entire work is his breaking down and crying over his fate in front of Dido. When taking those final words into account, and considering Chaucer's less than ideal portrait of Aeneas as explicated above, Aeneas starts to take on the appearance of an almost Machiavellian figure.

Chaucer's tale suggests that Aeneas uses Dido's pity for his condition for his own gain, which does have a basis in Virgil: "I took the man in, thrown up on this coast / In dire need, and in my madness then / Contrived a place for him in my domain" (IV. 515-7). Here, however, Virgil makes clear that this passage is from Dido's point of view. From Dido's perspective, Aeneas very well may have taken advantage of her pity to in order to have a temporary safe harbor. Virgil stops short of making this a narratorial interpretation, however. He has Dido speak these lines while condemning Aeneas for his plans to leave Carthage. Her thoughts may very well be valid from her perspective, but Virgil tries to give each perspective ample time to explain itself. Ovid takes Dido's perspective a step further:

You mean to leave me here—you cannot stay—
 An offshore wind has blown good faith away,
 And having cast off our relationship

For Italy—wherever—you take ship,
 Indifferent to Carthage and her new
 Ramparts to be ruled henceforth by you. (“Dido to Aeneas” 9-14)

Ovid's Dido has a similar perspective as Virgil's: Aeneas explicitly used her for his own gain and then abandoned her to the fates. The primary difference, as noted above, is the point of view of each tale. Virgil gives as unbiased account as he can of the events, because that is what the tenets of his genre (narrative epic) call for. Similarly, Ovid uses his elegiac genre to his advantage. Dido's voice subsumes the narrative and her perspective becomes the perspective of the work itself. Chaucer follows Ovid, but he also uses his authoritative narrative voice to lend further credence to Dido's woes. One can trace Aeneas' evolution from Virgil, Ovid, to Chaucer as: one half of a tragic romance, an oath breaker from a certain perspective, and, finally, as absolute philanderer with no morals.

Virgil's Aeneas does commit some actions that could be considered immoral in the *Aeneid* proper. Virgil, however, attempts to obfuscate these events. For example, Virgil hides the culpability of Aeneas' sword in Dido's suicide. During the act itself, Virgil notes: “she climbed the pyre and bared the Dardan sword— / A gift desired once, for no such need: (IV. 897-8). Rather than just flat out calling the sword “Aeneas' sword,” Virgil chooses “Dardan sword.” Aeneas is obviously not the only Dardan at Dido's court, but one could make the argument that he was of course closest to Dido and the sword is therefore his. However, calling the sword “a gift” further complicates the issue, because the gifts Aeneas gives to Dido are clearly laid out in book I: “a robe stiff with figures / Worked in gold” (883-4), a veil woven round / With yellow acanthus flowers” (884-5), “a scepter Ilionē, / Eldest of Priam's daughters, had once used” (889-90), “a collar hung with pearls” (891), and “a coronet / Doubled in gems and gold” (891-2). A

sword exists nowhere in this long list of treasure, which would lead one to conclude that it must be Aeneas' personal sword; Virgil, however, complicates this notion as well. When Aeneas leaves Carthage on his ship, "he pulled his sword aflash out of its sheath / And struck at the stern hawser" (IV. 804-5). Aeneas, of course, could have more than one sword, but why would Virgil go so far out of his way to complicate the issue? The general consensus seems to be that Aeneas uses a sword that Dido gifted him,⁸ but, again, why would Virgil feel the need to bury these details in the text? I argue that Virgil perhaps unintentionally obscures these details, as they complicate his portrayal of Aeneas as the great founder. He uses the sword of Aeneas, as it greatly complicates the story, but by making the reader work harder for the details, he perhaps helps Aeneas retain his honorable image if only somewhat.

Ovid, however, has no qualms about having implicated Aeneas in Dido's death. In Ovid's version, Dido clearly states:

I wish that you could see me as I write,
 Clasp your broadsword to my bosom tight,
 My teardrops falling on the naked blade
 Which soon instead of tears will drip with blood—
 Your gift was thoughtful, given my sad fate. (194-8)

No uncertainty exists in Ovid's rendition. As noted above, Dido narrates this story herself and she clearly indicts Aeneas as the owner of the sword. As in Virgil, Ovid calls the sword a "gift," but he does not provide any context for this gift. Ovid's story really begins at the end of book IV, so the reader is given no account of the gift exchange in book I. By omitting these details Aeneas gains a greater sense of culpability in Ovid's tale.

⁸For lengthier explorations of issues related to the sword exchange of Aeneas and Dido, see D. R. Bradley's "Swords at Carthage" and H. Akbar Khan's "Dido and the Sword of Aeneas."

Chaucer follows Ovid's lead concerning the sword. However, unlike Ovid, Chaucer endeavors to tell the whole story of Dido and Aeneas' relationship. In doing so, he necessarily touches on the gifts Aeneas gives to Dido: "both sceptre, clothes, broches, and ek rynges" (*Legend* 1131). As in Virgil, Chaucer includes no mention of a sword in this list. However, he takes this necessary narrative element from Virgil, and gives it an Ovidian spin. When Dido awakes to find Aeneas gone, Chaucer notes:

A cloth he lafte, and ek his swerd stondyng,
 Whan he from Dido stal in hire slepyng,
 Ryght at hire beddes hed, so gan he hie,
 Whan that he stal away to his navye; (*Legend* 1332-5)

By directly implicating Aeneas with the third person possessive pronoun, Chaucer once again follows in Ovid's footsteps regarding the general tone and mood of the piece. He places two critical elements of the story within close proximity to one another, Aeneas physically leaving the bed and the ambiguously intentional/unintentional leaving of the sword. Indeed, by following the Ovidian tradition, Chaucer gives Aeneas no chance to clear the air concerning this ambiguity. Even if he did, the implication seems to be that Aeneas either left the sword on purpose (indicting him for assisting a suicide), or by accident (labeling him as an unbelievably careless person). Overall, the impression that one gets when comparing Chaucer in light of these three pieces is a privileging of one "auctor" over another. The general sense of the story comes from Virgil, but Chaucer takes the larger tenor of his work from Ovid.

One must also keep in mind genre when working with these texts. Virgil and Ovid, as venerable and praiseworthy as the two of them are and were, were poets. They wrote poetry that while undeniably gorgeous, perhaps would not satisfy a reader looking for a more "historical"

account of the Trojan War and its various offshoot stories. The works of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian claim to alleviate this “problem,” i.e. the sacrifice of historical accuracy for poetic beauty. While both of these writers claim to have taken part in the Trojan War proper (giving them great ethos as historians), in actuality, “they were probably composed, in their original Greek forms, during the first century A.D.” (*The Trojan War* 3). Writers during Chaucer’s time, however, placed value in their works. Chaucer, for example, includes them in his *House of Fame*. Chaucer discusses the nature of fame in this work, and he includes many famous figures throughout history in order to facilitate this purpose. Chaucer placed great value in Dares and Dictys as historians, because he included them in the following catalog of honored figures in *The House of Fame*:

Ful wonder hy on a piler
 Of yren, he, the gret Omer;
 And with him Dares and Tytus [Dictys]
 Before, and eke he Lollius,
 And Guydo eke de Columpnis,
 And Englyssh Gaufride eke, ywis;
 And ech of these, as have I joye,
 Was besy for to bere up Troye.
 So hevy therof was the fame
 That for to bere hyt was no game. (1465-74)

While Chaucer does name Homer first in this sequence, he follows immediately with Dares and Dictys, suggesting a reverence for the two of them just behind Homer (he also names two other figures which will be discussed later: Guido de Cologne and Geoffrey of Monmouth). Homer

may have started this chain of events, i.e. the Troy story general speaking (and therefore deservedly takes his rightful place first), but the writers that came after him tell the “true story.” And, as Chaucer himself informs the reader, the cultural and historical profundity of these tales “was no game.”

Neither Dares nor Dictys touch on the matter of the *Aeneid* necessarily, but they do comment on Aeneas through his actions during the Trojan War. As detailed in chapter 1, Aeneas' important actions in Homer basically amount to his fights with Achilles and the outlining of his destiny (which Virgil would later interpret as a specifically Roman destiny). When looking at Dares and Dictys together one must keep in mind that Dictys of Crete ostensibly hails from Greece and Dares the Phrygian from Troy. They, then, bring the point of view of their respective cultures into account when examining Aeneas, or any other figure for that matter.

Dictys' first mention of Aeneas occurs before the war proper begins: “during the same time the home of Menelaus of Sparta welcomed Alexander the Phrygian, the son of Priam, who had come with Aeneas and other of his relatives. Alexander, taking advantage of Menelaus' absence, committed a very foul crime” (24). Dictys then goes on to describe the kidnapping of Helen. Dictys providing the reader with the Greek point of view, of course condemns this abduction as matter of course. However, the inclusion of Aeneas changes an overall interpretation of this scene quite a bit. Dictys mentions “Aeneas and other of his relatives,” when he could have simply called them Paris' relatives as a collective unit. He singles out Aeneas in particular to highlight his treachery, which in this particular case causes Aeneas to shoulder at least part of the blame for outbreak of war.

Not content with having Aeneas take part in the abduction of Helen, Dictys also places blame on him during an initial diplomatic meeting between the Greeks and the Trojans. After the

text makes clear that a negotiation does not seem imminent, Aeneas states: “up to this point we have merely been bandying words, unless you flee our land within a reasonable time, and take your fleet, soon, very soon, you will be tasting Trojan valor and courage. Troy has more than enough young men who are ready for battle, and every day new allies are coming” (53). At first glance, this passage calls to mind the passage from the *Iliad* in which Aeneas informs Achilles that words will not be enough to make him back down. The obvious difference between the two scenes is of course the fact that Homer depicted a battle between two men in a war already begun, while Dictys has Aeneas behave so in a diplomatic meeting. Regardless, one could argue that Dictys merely transposes Homer's characterization of Aeneas into a different setting. However, the Trojan response to Aeneas' saber rattling is less than reassuring for him, “as soon as the Trojan people learned how Aeneas had answered the envoys, they raised a huge tumult. Aeneas, they thought, was without a doubt a diplomat of the very worst sort; he was the reason why Priam's kingdom was hated and Priam's whole house was headed for ruin” 953). Dictys authorially informs the reader that the Trojans have lost faith in Aeneas, which clearly does not happen in Homer. By changing and inventing details, Dictys continues his transformation of Aeneas into a treacherous figure, which would later influence Chaucer.

Dares, supposedly a Trojan himself, gives no kinder representation of Aeneas than Dictys. For example, during a council concerning the war Dares relates: “after Amphimachus had spoken, Aeneas arose and tried to refute him. Speaking calmly and gently but with persistence, he urged the Trojans to sue for peace with the Greeks” (163). Dictys condemns Aeneas for starting the war, so perhaps in Dares he can regain some of his honor by attempting to put an end to it. However, King Priam's response puts any thoughts of the sort out of mind, “after this speech Priam arose with great eagerness and hurled many curses at Antenor and

Aeneas. They had been the means, he said, by which war had arisen, for they were the envoys who had been sent to Greece . . . and Aeneas had helped Alexander carry off Helen and the booty” (163-4). From both a Greek and a Trojan point of view, then, Aeneas is responsible for starting the war. But, even when he tries to put an end to it, the text continues to paint him negatively. The true treachery of Aeneas which would reverberate down the centuries would follow this meeting in due course.

Following Priam’s denunciation of Aeneas and Antenor, a curious event takes place. Antenor has a plan, which Dares describes as follows:

When all had sworn as he wished, he first sent word to Aeneas, and then told them his plan. They must, he said, betray their country, and in such a way that they might safeguard themselves and their families. Someone must go—someone that none could suspect—and tell Agamemnon. They must act quickly. He had noticed that Priam, when leaving the council, was enraged because he had urged him to sue for peace; and he feared that the king was devising some treachery. (164-5)

This passage and those that follow fundamentally change the nature of Aeneas’ character, and, I argue, are the ultimate source for Chaucer’s conception of Aeneas as traitor. Dares leaves no doubt in the reader’s head about the consequences of this plot; he uses “betray” specifically, which is of course what a traitor does to earn the title. Notice also that Antenor and company are concerned primarily with “themselves and their families,” which is a far cry from the absolute altruism that Aeneas displays throughout the *Aeneid*. Dares, furthermore, posits the idea that this conspiracy is concerned that Priam is hatching some “treachery;” not only are they traitors, but they are apparently hypocrites as well.

Plotting a conspiracy is one thing, actually enacting it is something very different. After a

clandestine meeting with the Greeks, the conspiracy hatches this plan: “when they had sworn to this promise, Polydamas gave them instructions. At night, he said, they must lead the army to the Scaean gate—the one whose exterior was carved with a horse’s head. Antenor and Aeneas would be in charge of the guard at this point, and they would open the bolt and raise a torch as the sign for attack” (165). Not only does Dares have Aeneas take part in the conspiracy and act as a primary agent in it, but he also has Aeneas let the Trojan Horse into the city itself. This narrative change so completely alters the character of Aeneas, that it makes him a traitor on par with any in Dante’s ninth circle. Aeneas effectively destroys Troy, but Dares was not content with just that change.

During the attack, Hecuba finds Aeneas and entrusts her daughter, Polyxena, to his care. Aeneas hides her, but after the attack, “Agamemnon summoned Antenor and told him to find Polyxena and bring her here there. Accordingly, Antenor went to Aeneas and earnestly begged him to hand over Polyxena, so that the Greeks would set sail. And thus, having found where she had been hidden, he took her to Agamemnon” (167). Following this act, the Greeks kill Polyxena. Not only does Aeneas betray his home and lead it to ruin, but he also allows the daughter of Hecuba and Priam to die after she was placed under his protection. Furthermore: “Agamemnon was angry with Aeneas for hiding Polyxena and ordered him and his followers to depart from their country immediately. Thus Aeneas and all of his followers departed” (167). Aeneas’ destiny itself, the very reason for his being, that which he sacrifices all for, his divinely ordained mission, is reduced to nothing more than the fleeing of a traitor from the scene of his crime. Dares destroys the very thesis of Virgil’s text in this moment. Virgil glorifies Aeneas because of his *modus operandi* as poet; Aeneas founds Rome and therefore he must be a virtuous, pious person. Dares as “historian,” however, corrects this oversight. The actual reason for Aeneas’

journey, according to Dares, has nothing to do with any noble goal; rather, Aeneas' leaves Troy as a traitor, an exile of the worst kind. This portrayal of Aeneas would go on to heavily influence Chaucer's poetry, as well as different writers in the interim.

CHAPTER THREE

Virgil, Ovid, Dares, and Dictys represent some of the most critical sources for Chaucer's Aeneas from the ancient world, but an analysis of Chaucer's Aeneas would not be complete without looking at some of Chaucer's more contemporary influences. The *Gawain* poet, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Guido delle Colonne serve as prime examples for various reasons. Guido's writings, for instance, serve as a likely space where Chaucer would have seen Aeneas in a similar manner to his own portrayal. The *Gawain* poet and Geoffrey of Monmouth, however, speak to a complex set of cultural and historical machinations that surely influenced Chaucer.⁹ Namely, these two figures examine Aeneas as the progenitor of the Romans, who in turn, according to this tradition, beget the English themselves.

The medieval conception of the Trojan diaspora begins outside of the most commonly known stories about the fabled town (i.e. the *Iliad*). For the average medieval reader, the sources were the *Aeneid* and the works of Dares and Dictys. However, what really gave these works much of their credibility was their ubiquity. For example, the Late Larry D. Benson of Harvard University states: "about 1160 Benoit de Saint-Maure used the Dares and Dictys material, and his imagination even more, to create one of the first French romances, the lavish *Roman de Troie*, whose 30,300 lines are full of desperate love stories and exotic, marvelous people, places, and things" (*The History of Troy in Middle English Literature* 4). Benoit would certainly

⁹For an interesting look at how a medieval Christian author might grapple with the pagan past, see Lynn Shutter's "Classical Pagans and Their Christian Readers in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*."

influence the medieval tradition with his *Roman de Troie*, but the influence that he had on Guido's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* proved to be a greater influence on the medieval world. Medieval readers found his work compelling for many reasons, but the composition style surely played a large role: “more than a century after Benoit, in 1287, Guido delle Colonne, a Sicilian judge and perhaps the poet mentioned by Dante in the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, translated Benoit's poem into a Latin prose work now called the *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, which de-emphasizes the love stories and drops, reduces, or doubts Benoit's marvels” (Benson 4). Guido ostensibly tells the “real story,” then, rather than engaging in the fanciful poetry of Homer or Benoit. As a history, rather than a poem, his work certainly would have appeared more authoritative to medieval readers that just wanted the facts of the matter. Furthermore, Guido consciously fashions this narrative: “Guido never names his real source, but insists he is keeping alive the full account of the two original reporters [Dares and Dictys]” (Benson 4). Clearly Guido was concerned with the image that his work conveyed. As historian, rather than poet, he removes all of the details that seem like poetic invention and leaves the bare minimum that one needs to understand the overall story. As discussed on pages thirty-seven and thirty-eight, Chaucer placed him within the pantheons of the great writers of the Troy matter in his *House of Fame*, indicating that he considered him an authority on the subject.

A medieval author writing about Troy, such as Guido, was necessarily engaging with a complex historical and cultural values. During this time period Troy signified the idea of imperial inheritance for much of Europe. This idea does come bundled with complications, as Sylvia Federico demonstrates: “Troy, of course, was never an empire. It was only ever a city-state. Its perimeters famously circumscribed by walls. But curiously, it was Troy and not Rome that signified 'imperial' for English and French authors alike in the later Middle Ages” (xv).

These authors belonged to cultures that considered themselves “descended” from Troy. The specific characteristics of Aeneas in Guido's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* take on new meaning in this context. As the figure that transmits Troy to Europe, Aeneas represents in many ways the imperial lineage that these cultures wished to possess, and reconciling the progenitor of a desired imperial dynasty with the traitorous Aeneas of Dares and Dictys proves to be a difficult and complex task.

Guido, as befits the medieval conception of Aeneas, also portrays him as a traitor in his *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (c. 1287). However, Guido's initial description of Aeneas seems at odds with this tradition: “Aeneas was thick of chest, small of body, and wonderfully prudent in deeds and temperate in words. He was famous for great eloquence, full enough of sound advice, wonderfully wise, and acquainted with much learning” (8. 241-4). This depiction does not accord with Aeneas' later actions in the work. During the heated initial debates in which the Greeks are trying to recover Helen, Guido describes Aeneas' contribution: “thus when they had ceased, Aeneas, who was then sitting next to King Priam, with no one else between, was unable to moderate his words, and thus spoke” (13. 188-90). The importance of the passage pertains to Guido's judgment of Aeneas, rather than the specific words of Aeneas. As evidenced above, earlier in the work Guido described Aeneas as “wonderfully prudent in deeds and temperate in words,” but he also has no qualms depicting Aeneas as one who cannot moderate his speech during a crucial diplomatic meeting. While not going as far as Dictys in his characterization of Aeneas as the terrible diplomat, it remains curious that Guido would have this disconnect between Aeneas' initial characterization and his actions, which continues throughout the work.

Despite this apparent friction between Guido's description of Aeneas and his later depiction of Aeneas' actions, Guido continues to follow the path laid down by Dares and Dictys

centuries earlier. Book twenty-nine of his *Historia* aptly begins with this title: “here begins the twenty-ninth book, about the betrayal of Troy by Aeneas and Antenor” (29). Before the text of book twenty-nine properly begins, then, Guido has authorially established his theme. The entirety of this book concerns the treachery of Aeneas despite Guido's earlier kind words for him. Following tradition, Guido states:

While the Trojans were experiencing such great pain and sorrow, and were enclosed in the city, Anchises, with his son Aeneas, and Antenor, with his son Polydamas, began to plan how they could make their lives safe so they would not be lost to the Greeks, and if they could it in no other way, to betray the city. (29. 25-9).

These statements largely accord with Dares and Dictys, which makes sense given that Guido claimed that his work was descended from the works of Dares and Dictys, as evidenced by Benson's words: “Guido never names his real source [Benoit's *Roman de Troie*], but insists he is keeping alive the full account of the two original reporters [Dares and Dictys]” (*The History of Troy in Middle English Literature* 4). Guido wanted his readers to believe that he was following Dares and Dictys, and he modeled many elements of his work on their works. For example: “although King Priam did not reply in any way to the request, still Aeneas and Antenor said it should be done, claiming that such a gift [Trojan Horse] would be for the perpetual and lasting honor of the city. King Priam unwillingly agreed that Aeneas and Antenor should comply with the guileful deceptions” (30. 136-40). Rather, than opening the gate for the coming armies (as in Dares and Dictys), Guido instead shows Aeneas and Antenor slyly arguing for the Trojan Horse to be admitted into the fabled city. This detail, perhaps, speaks to Guido's own description of Aeneas as being “temperate in words,” but in this particular case he is using his words for a less

than honorable purpose. Regardless, Guido continues to respect the groundwork of Dares and Dictys.

Guido does add a few details to Aeneas' actions that would surely affect a rendering of him by a medieval poet like Chaucer. For example:

When it was morning, in the dawning of the light, the Greeks, under the leadership of Aeneas and Antenor, the acknowledged betrayers of their country, rushed into great Ilium and found there no defense by the Trojans. On account of this, the Greeks put to death everyone they discovered. Pyrrhus entered the aforesaid temple of Apollo, where King Priam was awaiting his own death, rushed upon him with his naked sword, and in the sight of the evil Antenor and Aeneas, his guides, wickedly slew King Priam before the altar, so that the greater part of the altar was drenched by the great shedding of his blood.

(30. 205-13)

Guido's interpretation of Aeneas' actions resonates throughout this passage. The Greeks sacking the city are “under the leadership of Aeneas and Antenor,” implicating them as masterminds behind the coming violence. He also names Aeneas and Antenor as both “evil” and the “guides” of Pyrrhus during his killing of Priam. The treacherous pair seem to have no remorse as their sovereign is killed right before their eyes, at least none that Guido deems important to tell the reader. Rather, the image that Guido chooses to end this paragraph with is one of great violence against a sacred object. The altar, ostensibly an important religious item, becomes drenched with the blood the king himself. Few images come to mind that could be more indicative of treason than this one. The very lifeblood of the king himself covers the religious iconography of the people of Troy, while “pious” Aeneas watches in silence. This moment, and others like it,

memorialize the image of Aeneas as traitor.

Not content with the king of Troy metaphorically castigating Aeneas for his wicked treason, Guido has the queen of Troy verbally assault him:

Hecuba and her daughter Polyxena fled, and they did not know here they were fleeing. Still as they fled they met Aeneas. Hecuba said to him in her raging fury: “Ah, wicked traitor, how could you behave with such great evil and cruelty toward King Priam, from whom you have received such great possessions and by whom you have been exalted in great honor so that you could endure to guide murderers to him, whom you should have saved by your protection. You have betrayed your country and the city in which you were born and in which you were famous for such a long time, so that you see its ruin and you do not shrink from looking at the fires as it goes up in smoke.” (30. 214-24)

Her dialog continues as she implores Aeneas to hide Polyxena from the Greeks. Guido purposefully sets up this scene in order to make Aeneas appear as terrible as possible. The image of mother and daughter running lost through the destroyed city obviously incites great sympathy for them, and then Hecuba places all the blame squarely on Aeneas' shoulders. She uses much the same language that has been employed on Aeneas throughout the work (wicked traitor, betrayed, etc.), but coming from Hecuba in this particular situation it comes across as much more genuine. As the widow of Priam, Hecuba of course has much reason to indict Aeneas, and as the queen of Troy she also has him to blame for the destruction of her kingdom. She essentially accuses Aeneas of abdicating his duty, which would of course seem foreign to the Aeneas of Homer and Virgil.

Guido further complicates this already knotted story by changing a few key details, which

results in the traitorous Aeneas that would later influence Chaucer. Rather than having Aeneas reveal Polyxena's location to the Greeks, Guido actually has Antenor give up her location. The Greeks banish Aeneas from Troy for his seemingly valiant refusal to surrender his lieges' daughter, but then Guido states: "Aeneas, bearing a feeling of hatred against Antenor because he was banished from Troy by Antenor's action, and Antenor was allowed complete freedom to come to and go from Troy at his own free will, prepared hidden snares for Antenor so that he could be banished perpetually from Troy" (119-23). Aeneas suffers from his act of protecting Polyxena, but Guido follows this valiant act with more apparent treachery. Aeneas plots against his co-conspirator, not because he led the Greeks to Polyxena, but rather because Aeneas is jealous of Antenor's ability to enter and leave the sacked city of Troy as he wishes. This motive hardly comes across as noble, especially when embedded in the context of all of the treachery that the two of them were willing to engage in when they thought they would get off easily. Regardless, Aeneas has Antenor banished from Troy in Guido's version of the tale.

Guido troubles the straightforward historical telling of Aeneas as traitor during one of his final scenes concerning Aeneas:

Hence, he set out with his ships upon the deep ocean, and since he did not know at all what habitation the fates had decreed for him where he might place his family gods, he touched upon many places, troubled by the many perils of the sea. But by the will of the gods he entered the ocean with his ships, and he sailed for a long time through foreign seas until he reached Italy and went to Tuscany. (32. 241-6)

Many elements unfamiliar to the medieval tradition of Aeneas appear in this passage. Guido unapologetically touches upon Aeneas' traditional destiny. He even uses the word "fates" to describe the forces that are compelling Aeneas. Guido also mentions the pagan gods, which

would seem to go against the apparent historical purpose of his work. Indeed, it appears as if Guido when describing Aeneas' journey could not stop himself from using a more Virgilian approach to the matter. Furthermore, Guido ends this paragraph thus: “the present history does not tell about the particular adventures of Aeneas, however, and how it turned out for him after his departure from Troy and what happened to him after he ceased to voyage, that is, from the time when he came to Tuscany. But he who wishes to have knowledge of these things should read Virgil in the *Aeneid*” (33.247-51). While in the process of following the tradition of Dares and Dictys, Guido nevertheless inserts this strange nod towards Virgil. Guido’s tone also leans more towards respect and reverence for Virgil. Despite the fact that Guido engages with “history,” he seems to respect Virgil who no doubt would have been seen as more of a poet. This respect suggests a kind of dual consciousness on the part of Guido. He should not take Virgil at his word given the genre he ostensibly writes in; however, he not only gives a brief summary of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, but he even goes so far as to point the curious reader to his seminal text. Guido would further use this strange multifaceted, almost cognitive dissonance during a crucial passage concerning Aeneas.

Guido singles out Aeneas and gives him this passage:

From his race proceeded in great felicity that great and glorious Caesar Augustus. It is also about him that the Emperor Justinian makes glorious mention in his book of laws, that is, in the *Liber Authenticarum*, in the rubric that the name of the emperor is to be placed on legal documents. He says there that if the rest of the emperors after the great Caesar Augustus are called Caesars, with much more reasons should all the emperors from the earliest times be called Aeneases after Aeneas, who first governed the Roman Republic imperially, as if with the

imperial scepter. (13. 229-37)

This passage contradicts just about every action that Aeneas engages in within this particular text. Guido venerates Aeneas via the nod to Justinian's text, but he does not seem critical of Justinian's conclusions at all. Citing a text that claims that all future emperors should be called "Aeneases" certainly implies a kind of reverence for the person Aeneas himself, but the rest of the text does not comply with this viewpoint in the slightest. Rather, (as discussed above) Guido follows the guiding lights of Dares and Dictys and even invents a few more intricate details of his own to further denigrate Aeneas' character. How, then, does Guido mentally reconcile these seemingly irreconcilable figures? On the one hand you have Aeneas the treacherous villain, the man that betrayed Troy and was then cast out of his home. This figure, somehow, is the same figure that apparently all future emperors should be named after. This problem stems from the disparate sources that would have been available to Guido during his composition. Dares and Dictys (and the uncited *Roman de Troie*) all served as vehicles by which Guido received the figure of Aeneas as traitor and scoundrel. As Guido himself says, Virgil's text served as the text by which he receives Aeneas as the pious founder of Rome. Rather than preferring one over the other, Guido simply included both versions of the figure in his work (albeit while favoring the Dares and Dictys version). Medieval English writers were embroiled in this position, and this tradition is the one in which Chaucer himself writes his stories in.

Fourteenth century England found itself in a tradition that stretched by millennia. From the story of Virgil's *Aeneid* emerges a sort of romanticized imperial history. Aeneas leaves the burning Troy, and from the ashes of this empire emerges another: Rome. This idea of inherited imperial authority looked attractive to many European nations, and, indeed, many of them engaged in this fantasy:

The rights to the discovery or cultural ownership of Troy were contested in the later Middle Ages: Scores of European states and their rulers claimed Trojan precedent in efforts to achieve, consolidate, and maintain their power in relation to other states and often in relation to their own fractious constituencies. This plural aspect of “true” Trojanness stems from the popular medieval belief that following the fall of Troy, its handful of survivors were dispersed to the several corners of Europe to found individual new Trojan settlements. (Federico xii)

The idea of Trojan descent, the, concerned a large part of the western medieval world. The idea that one could inherit the imperial precedents of Troy (which would also imply inheriting Troy’s closest relative: Rome) had a lot of political and cultural power during this time period. The text that most clearly outlines the Trojan descent of the English is Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *History of the Kings of Britain*.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's seminal work predates Guido's by roughly a century (*History* dates to 1136), but the two works are connected in that they are both part of the medieval tradition of Trojan inheritance. Geoffrey aims to tell, not surprisingly, the history of Britain as it relates to the British monarchy. Geoffrey himself states his purpose thus: “this book, attractively composed to form a consecutive and orderly narrative, set out all the deeds of these men, from Brutus, the first king of the Britons, down to Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallo” (51). He aims to tell the true history of the land as far back as he can. Much of the work is categorically false as far as modern historians would be concerned, but the narrative captured the imagination of the British people despite its historical liberties. Post-1066 Britain found the idea of an unbroken chain of imperial sovereignty going all the way back to Troy to perhaps be a comforting idea in hard times.

Despite being about Britain, the work turns to the *Aeneid* fairly quickly. After a description of the land and earlier inhabitants of the British Isles, Geoffrey turns to Aeneas: “after the Trojan war, Aeneas fled from the ruined city with his son Ascanius and came by boat to Italy. He was honourably received there by King Latinus, but Turnus, King of the Rutuli, became jealous of him and attacked him. In the battle between them Aeneas was victorious” (54). This matter of fact tone varies greatly from Guido's, despite the fact that they are both ostensibly engaged in historical matter. Notice that Geoffrey does not dwell on Aeneas' “traitorous actions” or even implicate him in the war; rather, Latinus even “honourably received” him, and also clearly points to Turnus as the aggressive party. This tone would almost certainly be related to Geoffrey's purpose. He aims to tell the history of his people, and Aeneas turns out to be the great grandfather of the first king of Britain.

History largely follows the end of the *Aeneid*; Aeneas defeats Turnus and becomes the ruler of what would eventually become Rome. However, Geoffrey does not stop there. He briefly lays out Ascanius' rule after the death of Aeneas, but Brutus, Ascanius' grandson, proves to be of much more concern for the English. Ascanius has a son named Silvius whom marries a niece of Lavinia's. Their son, Brutus, has this prophesy foretold for him prior to his birth: “the soothsayers said that she would give birth to a boy, who would cause the death of both his father and mother, and that after he had wandered in exile through many lands this boy would eventually rise to the highest honour” (54). This prophesy does in fact come to pass as told, but in a rather unconventional sense. This prophesy seems to hark to back to Aeneas' actions in some of the previously discussed works, such as Ovid's *Heroides* and Guido's *Historia Destructionis Troiae*. If Brutus did actually kill his mother and father, that would seem to make him a villain on par with the Aeneas that betrayed Troy. But Geoffrey seems to have other ideas in mind for this

Trojan legacy. Prior to this prophecy, he has not cast any aspersions on Aeneas or his progeny, and he actually continues this trend despite this chilling forecast of fate. Brutus' unnamed mother does die, but she dies in childbirth, would it would be hard to fault the newborn for. The death of Silvius turns out to be much more complicated however: “at last, when fifteen years had passed, the young man killed his father by an unlucky shot with an arrow, when they were out hunting together. Their beaters drove some stags into their path and Brutus, who was under the impression that he was aiming his weapon at these stags, hit his own father below the breast” (55). Again, Brutus does technically cause the death of his father, but certainly without any malicious intention. Geoffrey seems to be playing with the idea of Aeneas as traitor by painting Brutus as the character whom inadvertently causes these catastrophes.

Again drawing upon the Aeneas tradition, Geoffrey has Brutus exiled for his father's death: “as a result of this death Brutus was expelled from Italy by his relations, who were angry with him for having committed such a crime” (55). Brutus faces exile as Aeneas does. Where Geoffrey passes unspoken comments on this tradition, however, is his refusal to personally implicate Brutus for his crimes. Brutus does cause the death of both of his parents, but he does not kill either of them on purpose. Similarly, Geoffrey omits the details of Aeneas' own exile, which perhaps suggest a similar situation: i.e. Aeneas was also exiled for “crimes” of a similar nature and other “historians” have embellished them. Further connecting the figures of Brutus and Aeneas are their respective journeys across the ocean. Aeneas of course lays down the foundations of Rome, but Brutus would be the progenitor of the English.

After a variety of adventures Brutus eventually has another prophesy told for him:

Brutus, beyond the setting of the sun, past the realms of Gaul, there lies an island in the sea, once occupied by giants. Now it is empty and ready for your folk.

Down the years this will prove an abode suited to you and to your people; and for your descendants it will be a second Troy. A race of kings will be born there from your stock and the round circle of the whole earth will be subject to them. (65)

Geoffrey explicitly links Troy and England via imperial inheritance. Not only will the descendent of the one of the most prominent Trojans be the founder of Britain, but it will be a “second Troy” itself. From this future will come those who will, apparently, subjugate “the round circle of the whole earth.” Indeed, the first part of this prophecy does not come to pass in the text itself: “he came at length to the River Thames, walked up and down its banks and so chose a site suited to his purpose. There then he built his city and called it Troia Nova” (73). This city would of course eventually turn into London. It would be difficult to understate the importance of these, albeit fictional, events on the English consciousness of Chaucer's time. The idea of New Troy would pervade fourteenth century England and influence not only Chaucer, but other prominent writers of the time as well.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* of course touches on the Arthurian legends as well. Consequently, the Gawain poet very briefly touches on Aeneas during his Arthurian *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In fact, in a work ostensibly about that most famous of legendary British courts, the poet begins with Troy:

Sithen the sege and the assaut was sesed at Troye,
 The borgh brittened and brent to brondes and askes,
 The tulk that the trammes of tresoun ther wroght
 Was tried for his tricheries, the trewest on erthe.
 Hit was Ennias the athel and his highe kynde
 That sithen depreced provinces, and patrounes bicomme

Welneghe of al the wele in the West Iles: (1-7)

(Since the siege and assault was ceased at Troy, the city destroyed and burned to brands and ashes, the man that there wrought treasonous plans was tried for his treacheries, the truest on earth, it was Aeneas the knight and his high kind that then subdued provinces, and became lords of well-nigh all the wealth in the west isles)

This passage encapsulates the dual-consciousness of the fourteenth century English writer concerning Aeneas. Aeneas of course commits acts of great “tresoun” against Troy, as the tradition dictates, and he subsequently undergoes trial for his “tricheries.” The poet greatly complicates this already complex passage with the clause, “the trewest on erthe.” The referent for this clause could either refer to the “tulk” (i.e. Aeneas) or his various treacheries. Depending on the reading one chooses this clause completely greatly changes the meaning of the line. Either Aeneas' actions were so heinous that they embodied the truest examples of treachery on the face of the planet, or the poet could be saying (in an apparent paradox) that this traitorous figure is also somehow simultaneously the truest man on earth. The clause itself could also be intentionally ambiguous on the part of the poet, which would only enhance the productive paradox that the figure of Aeneas himself represents for the writer. Regardless, the problems continue as Aeneas leads a “highe kynde” that also not so heroically “deprece” (or subdue) provinces on their path to wealth and power. Put another way: “thus *Gawain* starts with the unsettling contradiction that Aeneas was both the most trustworthy and the most treacherous” (Bowers 17). This contradiction does not only reside in the pages of *Gawain*, however. Distinct English literately traditions of this period also touch on the paradoxical Aeneas in slightly different ways.

Alex A. Mueller, for example, draws distinctions between the more French influenced poets of London, and the alliterative poets of northern England. He proposes a brand of skepticism on the part of these northern poets: “these romances perpetuate and in some cases enhance Guido's critiques of Trojan identity, attributes that distinguish these provincial histories from more popular *Brut* narratives that justified England's royal authority and national identity by claiming an ancestry that originates in ancient Troy and Rome” (4). These poems, including *Gawain*, acquire more comprehension in this mode. These northern poets sought to critique nascent desires of English imperialism, so they of course dwell on Aeneas as the traitorous progenitor of the English monarchy. What still remains a conundrum in light of this information, however, is Chaucer's scathing critique of Aeneas. Chaucer of course resides in London, and yet he still feels the need to offer extensive criticism to Aeneas on two separate occasions in his poetry. One would assume that as a Londoner of the period Chaucer would embrace the imperial inheritance from Troy and at the very least gloss over Aeneas' negative character traits, but instead Chaucer offers perhaps the most inflammatory defamation of Aeneas' character in the period (as discussed in section one).

Chaucer finds himself at the end of this complex line of inheritance regarding Aeneas. Guido delle Colonne and Geoffrey of Monmouth certainly influenced the Aeneas of Chaucer's poetry via their inclusion of key details that significantly shift Aeneas' character. Chaucer also could not help but be influenced by the equally complex contemporary notion of London as New Troy. Via criticism of the supposed progenitor of the imperial inheritance of Troy, Chaucer perhaps calls into question the essential positive quality of receiving this inheritance. Rather than focusing on the glory of Aeneas or the founding of Rome, Chaucer instead endeavors to show the sacrifices that had to be made by innocent people in order for this transfer of imperial

legitimacy to occur.

CONCLUSION

On a first reading, Chaucer's Aeneas confused me greatly. Chaucer took a figure that conventionally represents altruism and transfigured him into a reprehensible villain that thought nothing of leaving Dido behind. Through the values of his own time, Chaucer went out of his way to portray Aeneas in this manner. One might assume that he was just writing Aeneas this way because of his stated purpose in the *Legend of Good Women*, but Chaucer reveals a very similar Aeneas in his *House of Fame*, which leads one to assume that there was something else behind Chaucer's actions than mere convenience.

Literary history, however, reveals an astounding variety of different Aeneas figures. The heroic Aeneas of Homer and Virgil represents just one of the many interpretations of the character. Ovid, much like Chaucer in *Legend*, changes Aeneas to suit his own purpose (i.e. revealing the plight of those left behind in classical literature). All of these poetic figures (Homer perhaps less so) certainly influenced Chaucer and fourteenth century English literature broadly speaking, but the histories reveal perhaps the largest influence on this period's Trojan stories and figures.

Dares and Dictys takes the poetic stories of these past figures and blend their elements into what they claimed was history. This simple act had a profound effect on the literary consciousness of any medieval person working with classical matter. They changed key details of the plot to make it more believable, unintentionally palatable, to a medieval audience, such as the removal of the divine elements of the story. Key figures also undergo significant changes which drastically change interpretations of the character when compared to Homer and Virgil's originals. Aeneas undergoes change to such a degree that his "historical" self is almost

unrecognizable from his “poetic” self. They go as far as having Aeneas open the gates of Troy and selling out his own people, a far cry from the “pious” Aeneas of Virgil. The medieval period would continue this tradition while building on it.

Guido delle Colonne gives further veracity to the Aeneas of Dares and Dictys. He also adds onto the tradition with scenes such as Aeneas and Antenor watching Priam put to death and Hecuba’s disavowal of Aeneas. Guido, somewhat paradoxically, also seemed interested in representing the Aeneas of Virgil however. In passages such as his laying out of Aeneas’ destiny (as discussed in chapter 3), Guido acknowledges the Aeneas of the poetic tradition. These two Aeneas at first glance seem completely incompatible. If they are both the same figure, Aeneas would seem to be a schizophrenic capable of radical personality shifts at a moment’s notice. Guido uses them both (in varying portions) and he does not seem to see much of a problem with doing so. After all, he writes “history,” and the evidence seems to indicate to him a bipartite Aeneas figure.

Geoffrey of Monmouth picks up key aspects of this tradition for his own project. He wishes to give the English a work that explains their monarchical origins. He uses Troy to transfer both the prestige as well as the right of empire. He claims that the English descend from Aeneas via his great grandson Brutus. This act of imperial transference greatly complicates the web of influence surrounding Troy in the fourteenth century.

Chaucer (as well as other writers such as the Gawain poet) write works that necessarily need to comment on Aeneas. The Gawain poet seems to use Guido as a guide as he both exonerates and condemns Aeneas in so many lines. Chaucer seems to take a more straightforward approach to Aeneas however. He is certainly aware of the complex tradition surrounding Aeneas, but his portrayals of Aeneas are almost exclusively negative. Many factors

intersect to form this Aeneas, but the best explanation I have is the willingness of Chaucer to criticize nobility. As evidenced by just about any work in his extant corpus, Chaucer does not shy away from parody or satire, and perhaps the greatest ribaldry imaginable would be poking fun at the legendary progenitor of the English people.

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