

Our Modern *Aeneid* Call for Papers

Vergil's *Aeneid* is, of course, a longtime standard of the liberal arts curriculum. However, it has seen revived interest outside the academy. Since 2017, Vergil's epic has featured in articles in the *Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New Yorker*. All three articles argue that the *Aeneid* speaks as much to modernity as it does to antiquity. Mendelsohn's *New Yorker* piece put it best, writing,

Aeneas [is] . . . a survivor, a person so fractured by the horrors of the past that he can hold himself together only by an unnatural effort of will, someone who has so little of his history left that the only thing that gets him through the present is a numbed sense of duty to a barely discernible future that can justify every kind of deprivation. It would be hard to think of a more modern figure. Or, indeed, a more modern story.

Nearly every review of various recent translations provides an impassioned reaffirmation of the epic's contemporary relevance. However, scholarly practice has trailed behind scholarly rhetoric in this regard. For example, in demonstrating the modern importance of Vergil's classic, a number of reviews from the late 2000s briefly stress the similarities between Vergil and Kipling's views of empire. As the government sanctioned poets of global empires, one might expect to find thorough comparisons between Kipling and Vergil in the literature. Remarkably, one would find several articles devoted to historical inquiry into the quality of Kipling's classical education, but none directly considering the relationship between those classics and his own writing.

The gap between the general claims of the *Aeneid*'s relevance and a rigorous working out of the details is initially startling. After all, the *Aeneid* hardly lacks for excellent scholarship and commentary. However, upon reflection the lacuna is unsurprising. Scholarship on the *Aeneid* typically comes from classicists focused on the text's language and poetics, and its historical and cultural contexts. It is treated as an explicitly *Roman* cultural artifact. Since classicists are in part historians, a natural direction to expand their work on the *Aeneid* is to consider its reception in other historical epochs. This is precisely what we see in, e.g., Hardie's impressive work in cataloging centuries worth of use and misuse of the epic, and Farrell and Putnam's discussion of modern criticism of and response to the *Aeneid*. However, these historical methods, as important and useful as they are, won't suffice to examine the modern significance of the text. That requires a thoroughly interdisciplinary approach.

We propose a volume of essays from a diverse group of scholars and artists that represents a multidisciplinary, multicultural redeployment of the *Aeneid*. We do not propose examining the *Aeneid* as a decidedly Roman text. Nor do we propose an examination of a cultural artifact. Rather, we seek to present a volume that deploys the *Aeneid* anew, one that not only reflects the *Aeneid*'s status as a 'modern story' (Mendelsohn, *loc. cit.*), but one that inserts the *Aeneid* into contemporary discourse. We understand 'contemporary' and 'modern' rather broadly—essays need not be limited strictly to the new millennium. Papers that address, for example, the Vietnam War, the Khmer Rouge, or the Rwandan genocide, would certainly be welcome.

We invite submissions that engage with the aforementioned issues or related ones regarding the *Aeneid*, including the following:

- Artistic and cultural appropriation and reclamation, especially from a post-colonial perspective
- Using the *Aeneid* to explore constructions of gender
- Representations of trauma and its effects
- The *Aeneid* as therapy
- The *Aeneid* and modern commemorations
- The representation/literature/philosophy/theorizing of immigrants, immigration, refugees, cosmopolitanism, and global justice
- Race and ethnicity in the *Aeneid*
- Using the *Aeneid* to negotiate difference
- How the *Aeneid* complicates, or enriches modern (broadly construed) texts, art works, etc. (such as an analysis of the *Aeneid* and other later artworks of empire)
- The *Aeneid* as symbol and its function as a mine for cultural signposts, etc.
- The *Aeneid* and pedagogy
- The *Aeneid* in the public and/or digital humanities

Final papers should run between 4,000–6,000 words (inclusive of endnotes and works cited) and be formatted according to *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th Edition). Cite and abbreviate ancient texts according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd Edition). Revisions may be requested as a condition of acceptance. Please send all queries to the editors (Joseph R. O’Neill and Adam Rigoni) at 21stcenturyaeneid@gmail.com.

Authors are invited to submit an abstract of approximately 500 words, along with a select bibliography of at least ten sources, and an author bio of approximately 250 words to the editors at 21stcenturyaeneid@gmail.com by May 1, 2020.