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From Realism to Reserve: Undergraduate Essays on Charlotte Mary Yonge's The Heir of Redclyffe

Virgil's *Aeneid* and *The Heir of Redclyffe*

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Of all the classical influence in the Victorian period, perhaps no one writer had as much importance or influence as Virgil. His works, especially compared to other Augustan poets such as Ovid or Catullus, were "fairly safe, obnoxious perhaps to radicals and aesthetes but not to shockable parents or timid schoolmasters" (Vance 133). Nearly all of his work spoke to the Victorian world in some form or another; scholars had long debated the Messianic messages and Christian imagery of *Eclogues*, literary critics praised his sensitivities and pastoral depictions in *Georgics*, and the nationalistic praise and cautionary provisos in *Aeneid* felt even more relevant in the rise of British imperialism. John Keble, though admitting he had no real affinity for *Aeneid*, held great respect for Virgil's "blend of almost savage sternness and solemn sadness in the narrative" (144). Given that it had been written at the dawn of the Roman empire, *Aeneid* held great influence both as epic poetry and political commentary.

The epitome of a Victorian man's education was the ability to read and interpret Latin and Greek. Greek literature and discussions thereof were generally limited to the upper classes in terms of availability, but translations of Latin literature were more accessible to a growing middle class of readers. Slews of Virgilian quotes haunted academic lectures and common literature alike as the nineteenth century begot a revival in attempts to translate Virgil for a wider audience (Harrison). According to Stephen Harrison, Romantic and Victorian authors such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Arthur Hugh Clough held Virgil in such high esteem as to consider him worthy of emulation. Literary critics, on the other hand, viewed overly obvious similarities in language, plot, or structure, as unoriginal "mock-epics" (Wood). As such, classical references in fiction became limited to a few throwaway lines or carefully selected translated phrases (Harrison).

It is interesting then, that Aeneas and Achates, the eponymous hero of *Aeneid* and his companion, are mentioned twice in Charlotte Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe*, if only to jokingly describe Philip Morville and his young companion, James Thorndale. Guy tastefully remarks that "the fidus Achates was without his pious Aeneas" when James is without Philip at a ball (Yonge 59). In the same passage, Guy describes James' behavior as "such an imitation of Philip; looking droller . . . in his absence, than in his presence" (59). The second and last time Achates and Aeneas are brought up

references Guy's earlier jest but adds that James' and Philip's "friendship . . . did honour to both; and the value that the Thorndales set upon Captain Morville was not misplaced, and scarcely over-rated [sic]" (260).

The comparison of Philip to Aeneas, the most esteemed classical hero in the Victorian period, shows how the novel really focuses on him rather than on Guy. Taking Philip as an epic hero makes his actions appear more sympathetic to the reader and shows how classical standards were as much a factor in Victorian literature as other cultural and religious influences. Though women would not have been expected to be as highly educated in the classics as men, it's clear from Amy's joke that James views Philip as "Philip, Alexander, and Bucephalus into the bargain" in reference to Alexander the Great shows that broad classical allusions would have been understood by both genders. Yonge herself would have been more familiar with the classical influence than other female writers of her time, since she received a high education that was unusual for Victorian women (Dennis). Even though contemporaries and scholars tend to regard Yonge as a primarily Tractarian writer, her classical education influenced story and character in *The Heir of Redclyffe* more than Guy's brief quip might suggest.

Let us first begin with a discussion on *fides* and *pietas* and the implications of these in both the Roman and Victorian worlds. *Fides*, the Latin noun which begets the adjective *fidus* and our word "fidelity", was almost as important a Roman virtue as *pietas*, from whence our "pious" is derived. To Romans, *fides* and *pietas* embody the same sense of loyalty and duty, differing only in which social sphere they occupy. Where *pietas* meant a devotion to the gods, one's household and ancestors, and the state, *fides* was the camaraderie shared between soldiers, friends, or male relatives. It was the secrecy owed between honorable men, the reliability assumed of brokers and merchants, and the loyalty owed husbands by their wives (Philo et al.). Between Aeneas and Achates (and following, Philip and James), the two embody two different methodologies of the same virtue – one puts his people and state above himself, and the other places his leader and friend above himself.

James appears relatively infrequently in *Heir*, all but disappearing after the first half of the novel. Similarly, Achates is mentioned by name only twenty-one times in the 9,896 lines of the *Aeneid*, and eleven of these appearances all occur in Book 1. Still, even minor characters can be very revealing, as they usually exist to complement certain characters and moments instead of having their own stories. One important appearance Achates has in Book 1 is in his and Aeneas' scouting of Carthage. Upon viewing the bustle of Carthaginians preparing tools and sites to construct houses, buildings, walls, and a theatre, Aeneas famously remarks, "O fortunate ones, whose walls now rise!" (*Aen.* 1.437). Similarly, James accompanies Philip to Redclyffe so the latter can conduct business there during Guy's absence. Though Philip does not make as clear an exclamation as Aeneas, He paused at the gate, and looked back at the wide domain and fine old house . . . What would not Philip himself do if those lands were his,— just what was needed to give his talents free scope? and what would it be to see his beautiful Laura their mistress? (Yonge 261) Just as how Aeneas envies the Carthaginians their rising city in comparison to his relinquished home of Troy, Philip envies Guy the Redclyffe estate. He believes that he is better suited to run the estate

than his cousin, that Redclyffe itself could provide the means for his advancement. Though Philip does not say any of this out loud, James is present during the entire visit to the estate and for all of Philip's interactions with the Redclyffe tenants. His presence implies his support of Philip during uncertain times, where Philip will go on to face conflict with Hollywell. Similarly, Achates supports Aeneas in the difficult journey to Carthage, both at sea and on shore when the two go hunting to feed the Trojan refugees (*Aen.* 1.120, 157-193). The parallel imagery between Philip and Aeneas at Redclyffe and Carthage, respectively, shows James' role as Philip's companion and the validity of Guy's comparative remark.

In order to understand exactly what this comparison means for Philip, let us turn to the opening lines of *Aeneid*:

I sing of arms and a man, the first from the shores of Troy,
Made refugee by fate, to Italy and the shores of Lavinia;
Much was he thrown among the lands and the sea
By the power of the gods and by the heedful anger of savage Juno;
Much did he also suffer in war until he founded a city,
Brought his gods into Latium, from which came the Latin people,
The Alban fathers, and the walls of high Rome.
Muse, relate to me the causes, by what insult to her name,
Or at what so raging, did the queen of the gods compel
A man marked by piety to tumble through such injuries,
To undergo such labors. Can there be such wrath in divine minds?¹ (*Aen.*1.1-11)

Though he is not mentioned by name until line 127, Aeneas bears several noteworthy descriptors in Virgil's expository lines. First, he is *Troiae primus*, the "first of Troy" or the first Trojan to arrive in Italy. In the following line, he is *fato profugus*, the "refugee made by fate". Next, he is *multum . . . iactatus*, the man "much tossed about" on his turbulent journey towards what is to become Rome. Finally, he is the *insignem pietate virum*, the man "marked" or "singled out by his piety". Considering the definition of piety in the modern or even Victorian sense, though, it might seem that the deeply religious, morally upstanding Guy would be a better choice to represent the pious hero. After all, it might seem that Guy, too, appears to have been "tossed about" both on land and sea during his exile at Redclyffe.

However, this argument fails in more than one respect. The argument that Guy more closely matches Aeneas also does not account for the fact that it is Guy himself who compares Philip and James to Aeneas and Achates, respectively. He has removed himself from the metaphor of hero and companion; additionally, there is no character in *Heir* that serves the role of companion for him as well as James does for Philip. Further, it assumes that the Roman standard of *pietas* could somehow be equated to a Victorian sense of piety.

¹ All translations in this essay are my own, and all abbreviations come from the Oxford Classical Dictionary.

Pietas in the Roman context, however, can hardly be equated to our modern sense of piety the way *fides* might be equated to fidelity. Since the Roman pantheon expanded along with the reaches of the empire, Roman religious customs were non-universal at best. Any truly pious Roman devoted themselves absolutely to the gods of the city, personal gods in the household, the city of Rome itself, and ancestors, elders, and family members (Philo et al.). One of the Romans' favored depictions of *pietas* in *Aeneid* is the scene in Book 2 where Aeneas carries his aged, crippled father Anchises and his young son Ascanius from the flames of Troy. No gods are present here, but this is the scene in which Aeneas demonstrated the utmost loyalty and selflessness for his father. Symbolically, Aeneas also preserves the future of Rome when he carries his son out of Troy (Anderson). As aforementioned, *pietas* was less about religious morals than about a strong sense of moral integrity, honor, and duty. This is a description better suited to Philip than to Guy.

Finally, the argument for Guy as Aeneas does not address the other two epithets attributed to the latter, *Troiae primus* and *fato profugus*. Just as Aeneas is the first Trojan to arrive at Italy, Philip is the first bearing the Morville name in *Heir* to come to Hollywell. *Primus*, in some contexts, also denotes the chief or captain of a race, the "first man". Both Philip and Aeneas become *primus* due to their circumstances; neither was born into the heroic roles they are forced to occupy. Aeneas only becomes chief of his people when he flees Troy following the Trojan War; similarly, Philip's captaincy arises from the circumstances under which he enlisted in the military. Just as Aeneas never initially set out from Troy with the intention of arriving at Italy, Philip gave his money to his sisters believing that they would have more need of it than he.

Another translation of the phrase *fato profugus* that accounts for an alternative translation of *profugus* as "one who has fled" is that Aeneas-Philip is the "one who has fled from his fate". Many times in *Heir*, we see Philip subvert the fate that has been given him. Born into a gentlemanly family, Philip gives away his inheritance and sinks into temporary poverty while he builds a military career. Despite societal norms and his own morals dictating he would have little chance of being able to marry Laura, particularly with the deception of her parents, Philip keeps their engagement secret until he has built up his finances to a suitable rate. By the time Philip inherits Redclyffe following Guy's death, he does everything he can to try and give it away again. When he finds he can't get rid of the estate legally, Philip enlists the help of Charles, Laura, and Amy to help him manage Redclyffe. The journey to becoming the eventual heir of Redclyffe is a strenuous one for Philip, as he endures both literal war and domestic ostracism, however temporary, from his peers at Hollywell. He is *multum iactatus*, particularly between health and sickness during the fever that eventually claims Guy. In this vein and considering how Aeneas' other epithets fit him, Philip seems a much more classically "pious" character.

Thus, Philip, not Guy, is justified as Aeneas, the classical hero who overcomes hardship to establish his new settlement by the end of his story. As Susan Colón puts it, "Yonge's willingness for her readers' sympathy to be misled shows that she is intentional . . . about the reversals embedded in the narrative" (39). Though Colón was writing about parable and hermeneutic nuances in *Heir*, she makes a point to say that Yonge had intended for the reader's sympathies to fall more naturally to

Guy, only to be forced onto Philip again. Reading *Heir* as a subtle retelling of *Aeneid* lets us take Philip as the protagonist for the whole of the novel, since he plays the role of its hero.

Guy Morville is not absent from the *Aeneid* narrative, however. He takes on the form of the Arcadian prince Pallas, a later ally and companion who arrives in Book 8 to aid Aeneas when it seems that all hope for a settlement in Italy might be lost. The comparison between Guy and Pallas may not be evident at first. After all, Pallas does not bear any defining epithet like either Achates or Aeneas. Among many other things, he is described as audacious, beautiful, and princely. Virgil takes special notice in describing Pallas' qualities in relation to his youth, similar to how the Edmonstones remark on Guy's nobility and youth when he first arrives at Hollywell. The similarities do not end here. Besides the fact that both Guy and Pallas share their grandfathers' names, they are also both of noble origin. When Pallas first beholds Aeneas and the Trojans in Italy, he rushes to arms and questions the origin and intent of Aeneas, asking,

"O men, what cause has brought you to brave the unknown roads?
Where do you reach? What race? Where is your home?
Do you bring peace or war?" (*Aen.* 8.112-114)

Pallas' anticipation that Aeneas' presence might mean war for his home parallels Guy's initial concerns about the hereditary feud betwixt him and Philip. However, having spent much time with him and being assured of peace by a third party (for Aeneas, Evander; for Guy, Charlotte), Pallas-Guy eventually becomes a close confidant to Aeneas-Philip. In fact, while he is under Aeneas' care, Pallas strives to learn as much as he can from the Trojan leader, similar to how Guy begins lessons in Latin and Greek upon Philip's thinly veiled insistence.

Pallas also offers comfort to Aeneas while the latter is stressed about the war with the Rutuli and their allies. When Aeneas gathers his fleets in Book 10, it seems that "his cares cannot give his limbs rest" (*Aen.* 10.217). Aeneas wrestles with his feelings quite often, but as a Stoic hero, he does not show this. Comparably, Philip has interior musings of his own, usually concerning either Guy and his apparent charge of gambling or Philip's secret engagement to Laura Edmonstone. Philip's interiority is gradually revealed during his fever, when he confesses to Guy his relationship with Laura. Likewise, within the Trojan fleet,

Here, great Aeneas sits and to himself revolves
The various outcomes of war, and Pallas on his left
Fixed there now inquires about the stars, their unseen

Journey through the night, now about his miles among the land and sea. (*Aen.* 10.159-162)

Just as Pallas remains by Aeneas' side and learns all he can about the Trojan leader's journey, Guy stays to care for Philip and learns much about Philip's history. *terraque marique* in the last line of this quote echoes *et terris . . . et alto*, the lands and the deep sea from Book 1, where Aeneas was "greatly tossed about" (*Aen.* 1.3). The parallel wording implies that Pallas also learns of the struggles Aeneas faced on the journey to the Italian peninsula, in a manner akin to how Guy learns of the stakes behind Philip's reasoning to keep his affair with Laura secret, of the "great disturbance and displeasure" that

poverty had borne the couple (Yonge 422). As Pallas admires the arduous journey Aeneas has taken to arrive at Italy, so too does Guy admire Philip's own intellect and endurance through his self-struggle.

Unlike Aeneas and Achates, Pallas does not bear a firm epithet that connects him to a Roman virtue. Despite Pallas' characterization as a young and innocent, noble prince, however, he is a capable warrior in his own right. During the battles of Books 9 and 10, Pallas proves his mettle by killing several Rutuli before engaging in fatal single combat with the Rutulian leader, Turnus. Most notable is this segment of his speech to his men in a hopeless situation in Book 10:

"No divinities oppress us; we are mortal men against a mortal enemy.

Ours is an equal number of hands and souls as theirs."

(*Aen.* 10.375-376)

Following this, Pallas charges the enemy and the Arcadians, roused to action, begin to get the upper hand in the battle again. Guy rouses the tenants of Redclyffe to action in an equally heroic manner to rescue the shipwrecked men caught in the storm during his exile. Pallas and Guy both take the initiative in a seemingly hopeless situation to reverse both their men's spirits and the outcome of the day.

In a discussion of Pallas, we cannot forget his death and the effects thereof on Aeneas. In a way, Pallas could be viewed as a tragic hero, whose fall arises from his over-confidence in facing Turnus. Aeneas feels he is responsible in part for Pallas' death, having brought the young prince into battle and unable to save him. Similarly, Philip blames himself for Guy's death. Had he not contracted the plague, Guy would not have nursed him and subsequently succumbed to the same illness. Pallas and Guy both pay for their heroes' transformations with their lives; Aeneas foregoes *pietas* and slaughters Turnus and several Rutuli in a fit of rage, while Philip repents all previous immoral action and steps into his new role as the true heir of Redclyffe.

Despite having personified a Stoic archetype for most of the epic, Aeneas in Book 12 "is allowed to yield to his passionate side and kill his helpless victim [Turnus]" following Pallas' death (Putnam 64-65). Symbolically, Putnam also points out that Turnus is the last of a slew of human sacrifices meant to honor Pallas, echoing the deaths of twelve Trojan youths who paid for Patroclus' death in the Iliad. Here, Aeneas exchanges his epithet of *pius* for *furens*, a word the Stoicism-inclined Romans would have associated with madness, frenzy, and general lack of emotional control.

While there is little bloodshed and certainly no practices of human sacrifice in *Heir*, Philip does spiral into self-doubt and loathing following Guy's death, an antithesis to the coolness of his character in his criticisms of others prior to Guy's death. Following the epic tradition, he must undergo a transformation, a metamorphosis, which must break his character before remaking it. Philip, like Aeneas, becomes more subject to his emotions towards the end of *Heir*. Aeneas' emotional fury leads not only to Turnus' death, but also the cementing of the Trojan-Latin alliance and the eventual founding of Rome. Likewise, Philip's emotional vulnerability allows him to foster new relationships with the Edmonstones as he, Laura, and Charles come into joint management of Redclyffe. Philip not only learns to work with others; he embraces Charles' and Laura's help in his weakened state, a direct contradiction to his aforementioned view of Redclyffe when he and James visited it alone.

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The implications of the aftermath of *Aeneid* show a bright future for the new heir of Redclyffe; Aeneas goes down in history and literature as the ancestral forefather of the Roman empire. While Philip does not go on to found an empire, it is implied that he lives his own fulfilling life in the eyes of his niece, "to whom he never was otherwise than indulgent, nay, almost reverential, in the gentleness of his kindness" (Yonge 527). To the Romans, Aeneas was their role model and hero who established the city that would go on to become their home and empire. To Mary Verena, the same could very well be said of Philip Morville, the man who cares for her father's estate and her home.

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