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Aeneas's Journey in Contemporary Literature

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IL VIAGGIO DI ENEA NELLA LETTERATURA CONTEMPORANEA

DELOS

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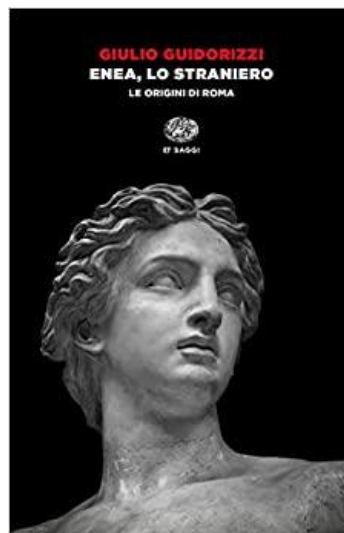
GIULIO GUIDORIZZI, *AENEAS, THE FOREIGNER. THE ORIGINS OF ROME* (2020)

[...] Apollo's palm tree gently shook its long branches in the Aegean wind; that was a sacred and prophetic place. Only there could the refugees find some sign to guide them: the sea was all the same for land-dwellers, an unknown plain to lose themselves in every day! They sought a new homeland, but where? All around lived Greeks, Phoenicians, and Egyptians; the land was full of men, and in those places they could hardly find a new space, just for them. They had to go far away, and cross the terror of unknown waters.

And it was in that very spot, on Delos, that a voice spoke to Anchises; perhaps a hallucination, something fading away between the wind and the tide. Or perhaps Apollo took pity on that group of refugees. The whole island, every stone, every tree, had a voice, and a crowd of people went to seek oracular responses at the temple of Apollo.

The voice came to Anchises as he was leaving the temple, where he arrived leaning on his stick to adorn the wooden statue of the god with a garland. "Seek the old country", he heard distinctly. He turned around: there was nobody there, only the wooden statue standing upright, feet together, with its arms outstretched and two beads of glass beneath his eyelids..

The old man hobbled towards the ships. Apollo has spoken to me – he said, as soon as he entered his son's tent – he ordered us to seek the old country. I have heard that Crete is the land where everyone comes from, the oldest land, the land where Zeus was born in a cave. [...]



The stay on Delos is the subject of one of the many rewritten pages in which Giulio Guidorizzi (b. 1948), formerly Professor of Greek Literature at Turin University, goes back over the story of Aeneas: from his escape, to his peregrinations in the Mediterranean, until his arrival in *Latium*, among peoples who were initially hostile, but who later came together in a single people. With his unique lightness, this “essay with a narrative touch” (from the back cover) allows us to relive the moment of the

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honours in Apollo's temple, and the subsequent prophecy of the god, who retains the ambiguity that is typical of oracles:

<p>[...] <i>Antiquam exquirite matrem.</i> <i>Aeneid</i> III 96</p>	<p>[...] Seek out your ancient mother. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum</p>
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This is a crucial passage in the poem: indeed, Apollo alludes to Dardanus, the oldest progenitor of the Trojans, who had come to the Troad from Italy. Accordingly, the journey by Aeneas and his companions appears as a return to an original motherland. The misunderstanding by Anchises, who thinks of Teucer, and the island of Crete, where he came from, leads to a further extension of the *errores* of Aeneas' companions, in other words their wanderings in the Mediterranean, on which the first half (the so-called Odyssey-like part) of the *Aeneid* is constructed. The term "refugees", which Guidorizzi uses twice to refer to Aeneas and his group, directs attention to that which is posited, starting with the title, as the main theme of this book, the fact that the Romans descended from an *advena*. The reflection of this rewriting regarding one's existence 'as a foreigner', which Aeneas feels ever since the moment he flees from Troy, finds an effective synthesis in Anchises' words to his son at the very moment of their departure: "You will no longer feel like a foreigner when you realize that one is always a foreigner".

Further reading:

- G. Guidorizzi, *Enea, lo straniero. Le origini di Roma*, Torino, Einaudi, 2020.
- P. Boitani, [recensione], "Il Sole24Ore", 11 Novembre 2020
(<https://www.fondazionevalla.it/rassegna-stampa/giulio-guidorizzi-enea-lo-straniero-le-origini-di-roma/>).
- A. M. Urso, *Enea, l'eroe che non ti aspetti*, "Gazzetta del Sud", 31 dicembre 2020
(<https://gazzettadelsud.it/articoli/cultura/2020/12/31/enea-leroe-che-non-ti-aspetti-moltiplicato-in-un-mare-di-libri-b914bb71-5051-4e96-8b5d-5862da754834/>).
- A. Zaccuri, *La rivincita di Enea nell'anno del bisogno*, "Avvenire", 29 dicembre 2020
(<https://www.avvenire.it/agora/pagine/la-rivincita-di-enea-nellanno-del-bisogno>).