

(i) Aeneid vs Odyssey Underworld - 2017

I agree that the journey to the Underworld for Aeneas is evidently more moving and dramatic than that of Odysseus' experience of the Underworld. One of the main reasons for this is the way each hero experiences it. Aeneas physically descends into the Underworld at the entrance at Lake Avernus along with the Sibyl of Cumae. He experiences all the levels of the Underworld like crossing the river Styx, seeing the Fields of Mourning, witnessing the screams of the tortured in Tartarus and of course travelling to the Elysium Fields.

In contrast, Odysseus' is granted access to a portal to the Underworld in a cave by the River Oceanus. The dead come to him in a mass collection of spirits. It is pretty much free reign for spirits in Homer's *Odyssey* rather than having a clear structure like Virgil's *Aeneid*. This makes the *Aeneid*'s version more dramatic and moving.

Another reason for Aeneas' time in the Underworld being so meaningful and powerful is his encounters with the ghosts of the Underworld. AA is distraught when he sees Dido but she doesn't want anything to do with him after he left her in Carthage and she killed herself. He also meets the ghost of his fallen comrade Palinurus and his father Anchises who proved himself a vital source of wisdom and guidance in Aeneas' life in the previous books.

Odysseus, similarly, encounters the ghosts of his mother Anticlea and fallen comrade Elpenor. While sad, Odysseus wasn't that affiliated to his comrades as Aeneas and we have no previous knowledge of his mother until this scene. As a reader, we are not as attached to Anticlea as we are to Anchises.

Further explanation for AA's journey to the underworld being far more climactic than that of Odysseus is Aeneas learning of his destiny and the future of Rome. It's true that Odysseus too goes to the Underworld to learn of his future journey home and his destiny in Ithaca from the prophet Tiresias, but it is his journey home that concerns him. For Aeneas however, this is not the case.

Aeneas has already been told of the war and other hardships that awaits him in Lavinium. But it is Book VI which reveals the divine destiny of Rome. Anchises shows his son his future descendants, including famous figures from Rome's history such as Romulus, Julius Caesar,

Marcellus and of course, Rome's emperor at the time, Augustus. This moment in the epic demonstrates to Aeneas that his destiny is divine and that he needs to continue his voyage and complete his mission. It makes his journey to the Underworld more thrilling than that of Odysseus.

In addition to this, Aeneas receives much more help from the Gods to enter the Underworld. His Greek counterpart Odysseus does not receive this same treatment. Aside from getting guidance from the nymph Circe, Odysseus pretty much does all the work himself to be granted access to the spirits of the Underworld. It's also doesn't require much involvement from the Gods.

Aeneas, in contrast, must retrieve the golden bough, which can only be removed from its tree if that person requires access to the Underworld. Venus' who is Aeneas' mother, leads him to the bough and he removes it with ease which supports the idea of the hero being on a heavenly cause. The divine intervention in Book VI just creates more drama and tension for Aeneas' arrival in Italy as it seems all celestial powers are backing the founding of this city.

Finally, it is the overall serious message of war in Aeneas' trip that makes it more compelling and emotional than Odysseus'. Odysseus' fallen comrades have a nice reunion with him. Achilles admits he regrets choosing the glory and going to Troy when he knew he would die and Agamemnon is bitterly mad at Clytemnestra for murdering him but other than that, the two are relatively fine. There is a complete contrast with Aeneas seeing Deiphobus who was brutally murdered during the sack of Troy. His soul too continues to suffer as Aeneas observes he is deformed.

The message of war in each epic is why the Aeneid's version is more dramatic. The underworld reveals the true horrors of war never really end, even after death. This is of course propaganda for Augustus who wanted his citizens to only think of peace. Virgil uses the tragedy of Troy as a propaganda tool, but the vivid imagery makes for an expressive episode.

Overall, it is the purpose of the hero's journey which makes the Aeneid's Underworld sequence more sensational. Odysseus' embarkment serves as a plot device; to encourage Odysseus on his journey home and provide more backstory to his life with characters such as Anticlea, Achilles and Agamemnon making an appearance. The purpose for Aeneas is simple; to showcase the glory of Rome. Virgil would have ensured that it was poignant and inspirational.