

The Muses' Playground: The Narrative Structure of the *Aeneid*

A) *Odyssean* and *Iliadic* halves

- 1) "I sing of arms and of the man" ("Arma virumque cano") (Verg. *Aen.* 1.1; tr. D. West)
- 2) "The hero of the tale which I beg the Muse to help me tell is that resourceful man who roamed the wide world after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy. He saw the cities of many peoples and he learnt their ways. He suffered many hardships on the high seas in his struggles to preserve his life and bring his comrades home." (Hom. *Od.* 1.1-5; tr. E. V. Rieu)
 - 12 books (not 24) but both. Arms (*Iliad*) and man (*Odyssey*). Which one first? *Odyssey-Iliad*; Implications? Bleak: ending with war; Iliadic funeral games moved to Book 5; no Homeric reconciliation
- 3) "I sing of arms and of the man, fated to be an exile, who long since left the land of Troy and came to Italy to the shores of Lavinium; and a great pounding he took by land and sea at the hands of the heavenly gods because of the fierce and unforgetting anger of Juno. Great too were his sufferings in war before he could found his city" (Verg. *Aen.* 1.1-6)
- 4) "I shall speak of fearsome fighting, I shall speak of wars and of kings driven into the ways of death by their pride of spirit, of a band of fighting men from Etruria and the whole land of Hesperia under arms. For me this is the birth of a higher order of things. This is a greater work I now set in motion." (Verg. *Aen.* 7.41-4, Vergil, proem in the middle)

B) Replay in the first half

- 5) "unrolling for you the secrets of the scroll of the Fates" (*Aen.* 1.262, *volvens fatorum arcana movebo*)
- 6) "Meaning ... is largely generated through the repetitions of situations and actions" (Hardie 1993: 15)
 - wandering (delays: seven years): *Odyssey* suitable model (digressive "romance" rather than progressive epic *Iliad*: cf. Quint)?
- 7) "the months have passed and the cycle of the year is now complete since we laid in the ground the bones that were all that remained of my divine father and consecrated an altar of mourning." (Verg. *Aen.* 5.46-8; in Sicily again)
 - Regression: refounding Troy (Thrace; Crete; Helenus at Buthrotum; Carthage) and repeating history (see Iarbas and Sibyl)
- 8) "Grant us walls and descendants and a city that will endure. Preserve these remnants that have escaped the Greeks and pitiless Achilles, to be a second citadel [*Pergama*] for Troy." (Verg. *Aen.* 3.85-7; Aeneas to Apollo)
- 9) "Impatiently I set to work on walls for the city we all longed for. I called it Pergamea and the people rejoiced in the name." (Verg. *Aen.* 3.132-4; Aeneas at Crete)

10) "As I walked I recognized a little Troy, a citadel modelled on great Pergamum and a dried-up stream they called the Xanthus. There was the Scaean Gate and I embraced it. Nor were my Trojans slow to enjoy this Trojan city with me." (Verg. *Aen.* 3.349-52; Aeneas at Buthrotum)

11) "We shall make them both one Troy in spirit" (Verg. *Aen.* 3.504-5; Aeneas of his future city and Buthrotum)

12) "second Paris, with eunuchs in attendance and hair dripping with perfume and Maeonian bonnet tied under his chin" (Iarbas on Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 4.215-7)

13) "I see the Thybris foaming with torrents of blood. There you will find a Simois and a Xanthus. There, too, will be a Greek camp. A second Achilles is already born in Latium, and he too is the son of a goddess. Juno too is part of a Trojan destiny and will never be far away when you are a suppliant begging in dire need among all the peoples and all the cities of Italy. Once again the cause of all this Trojan suffering will be a foreign bride, another marriage with a stranger." (Sibyl to Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 6.87-94)

C) Replay in the second half:

i) repetition with a difference

- Troy (building settlement; taking Lavinia from Turnus)? BUT looking to future not past; adopting teleological Iliadic model; taking role of victorious Greeks (Aeneas as Menelaus and Turnus as Hector)

14) "Aeneas himself was marking out the line of his walls with a shallow ditch and beginning to build on the site, surrounding this first settlement on the shore with a stockade and rampart as though it were a camp." (Verg. *Aen.* 7.157-9; Aeneas on arrival at Latium)

15) "Venus, too, has a son, a second Paris, and torches will again be fatal, for this second Troy." (Juno, paralleling Aeneas and Paris, Verg. *Aen.* 7.321-2)

16) "When the first wind blows from the north, that lying brigand will take to the high seas and carry off my daughter, leaving me desolate. Is this not how the Phrygian shepherd wormed his way into Sparta and carried Leda's daughter Helen off to the cities of Troy?" (Amata paralleling Aeneas and Paris, Verg. *Aen.* 361-4)

- Juno: anger (speeches in Books 1 and 7); use of Aeolus then Allecto BUT lessens aims

17) "Am I to admit *defeat (victam)* and give up my attempt to keep the king of the Trojans away from Italy? So the Fates do not approve! Yet Pallas Athene could fire the fleet and drown my own Argives in the sea because of the guilt of one man, the mad passion of Ajax" (Juno, Verg. *Aen.* 1.37-41)

18) "The Trojans are where they wanted to be in the valley of the Thybris, safe from the sea and safe from me. Mars had the strength to destroy the monstrous race of Lapiths. The Father of the Gods himself handed over the ancient kingdom of Calydon to the wrath of Diana, and what great crime had the Lapiths or Calydon committed? But here am I, great Juno, wife of Jupiter, thwarted, though I have tried everything that could be tried. Nothing has been too bold for me. And I am *being defeated (vincor)* by Aeneas!" (Juno, Verg. *Aen.* 7.303-10)

- arrivals at Carthage and Latium: embassy led by Ilioneus; some success; presents BUT differences (hint of decadence, like Troy, v virtue) > should ally with Latins

19) “Here too there is just reward for merit, there are tears for suffering and men’s hearts are touched by what man has to bear. Forget your fears. We are known here. This will give you some hope for the future.” (Aeneas at Carthage, Verg. *Aen.* 1.461-3)

20) “Our king was Aeneas. He had no equal for his piety and his care for justice, and no equal in the field of battle. If the Fates still protect him, if he still breathes the air of heaven, if he is not even now laid low among the merciless shades, you would have nothing to fear or to regret by taking the lead in a contest of kindness.” (Ilioneus at Carthage, Verg. *Aen.* 1.544-9)

21) “I swear by the destiny of Aeneas and his right arm, strong in war and the weapons of war, that many nations have asked to enter into alliance with us. Do not despise us because we choose to come to you with words of supplication and olive branches wreathed in wool in our hands.” (Ilioneus at Latium, Verg. *Aen.* 7.234-7)

22) “the treasures that had been rescued from the ruins of Troy, a cloak stiff with gold-embroidered figures and a dress These miracles of workmanship had been given to Helen of Argos, and she had taken them from Mycenae when she came to Troy for her illicit marriage with Paris. There was also the sceptre which had once been carried by Ilione, the eldest daughter of Priam, a necklace of pearls and a double gold coronet set with jewels.” (Verg. *Aen.* 1.647-55; gifts for Dido)

23) “These gifts, besides, Aeneas offers you, some small relics of his former fortunes rescued from the flames of Troy. From this gold cup his father Anchises used to pour libations at the altar. This was the sceptre Priam would hold in his hand as he gave solemn judgement before the concourse of the nations, and here are his sacred head-dress and the vestments woven for him by the women of Troy.” (Ilioneus on gifts for Latinus, Verg. *Aen.* 7.243-8)

24) “There in front of the city boys and young men in the first flower of their age were exercising with their horses, training chariot teams in clouds of dust, bending the springy bow, spinning the stift-shafted javelin, racing and sparring” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.161-5; of Latium)

- doubling of visual images in Book 1 and 7: temple pictures showing glory of Greeks rather pity for the Trojans? Italian images show glorious history of race

ii) surprising repetition

- hell: Aeneas leaves underworld to find it in Italy

25) “... a fearful cave which is a vent for the breath of Dis, the cruel god of the underworld. Into this cave burst Acheron and here a vast whirlpool opens its pestilential jaws, and here the loathsome Fury disappeared, lightening heaven and earth by her absence.” (of Allecto, Verg. *Aen.* 7.578-71)

26) “There are ... murderous War ..., the iron chambers of the Furies and raving Discord with blood-soaked ribbons binding her viperous hair.” (home of Allecto, Verg. *Aen.* 6.279-81)

27) “Discord is made perfect in the horror of war” (Allecto to Juno of Italy, Verg. *Aen.* 7.545)

28) “Here too are all manner of monstrous beasts, Centaurs ..., Scyllas ... Briareus with his hundred heads, the Hydra of Lerna hissing fiercely, the Chimaera armed in fire, Gorgons and Harpies and the triple phantom of Geryon.” (Verg. *Aen.* 6.285-9; monsters in underworld met by Aeneas)

29) “On the towering top of his triple-plumed helmet there stood a Chimaera breathing from its throat a fire like Etna’s” (armour of Turnus, Verg. *Aen.* 7.785-6)

30) “on his shield he carried his father’s blazon, the Hydra and its snakes, the hundred snakes encircling it.” (Aventinus’ shield, Verg. *Aen.* 7.657-8)

31) “They [Catillus and Coras] would charge out in front of the first line of battle through showers of missiles, like two cloud-born Centaurs plunging down in wild career from the snow-clad tops of Mount Homole or Mount Othrys” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.673-6; of Aeneas’ opponents)

▪ storms: literal to metaphorical but more threatening

32) “bronze gleamed in answer to the challenge of the sun and threw its light up to the clouds, like the sea whitening at the first breath of wind and slowly stirring itself, raising its waves higher and higher till it reaches from the depths of the sea-bed to the heights of heaven.” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.526-30, of Italians confronting Trojans)

33) “They rushed to besiege the palace of king Latinus who stood unmoved ...like a solid rock in the ocean pounded by breakers, standing fast with the waves howling around it, while reefs and foam-soaked scars roar in helpless anger and the seaweed is forced against its side, then steams back with the undertow.” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.585-90)

34) “as many as the waves that roll in from the Libyan ocean when fierce Orion is sinking into the winter sea” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.718-9; of Aeneas’ enemies in catalogue)

35) “This is where we were steering when suddenly Orion rose in cloud and tempest and drove us on to hidden shallows” (Verg. *Aen.* 1.534-6; Ilioneus blames Orion for scattering ships)

▪ love: Dido left behind but warped passion (language of love for Amata’s hate; Amata like Dido e.g. Bacchant link; pawn of Juno)

36) “Come now, Erato, and I shall tell of the kings of ancient Latium...” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.37-8; Erato= muse of love)

37) “she [Allecto] besieges the silent threshold of *Amata* (*the loved one*)” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.343) (“*tacitumque obsedit limen Amatae*”; see Lyne)

38) “Driven to distraction and burning with passion, she raged and raved round the whole city like a Bacchant stirred by the shaking of the sacred emblems and roused to frenzy when hears the name of Bacchus at the biennial orgy and the shouting on Mount Cithaeron calls to her in the night.” (Verg. *Aen.* 4.300-3; of Dido)

39) “Rumour ran raving like a Bacchant through the stricken city. The palace rang with lamentation and groaning and the wailing of women and the heavens gave back the sound of mourning. It was as though the enemy were within the gates and the whole of Carthage or old Tyre were falling with flames raging and rolling over the roofs of men and gods.” (Verg. *Aen.* 4.665-71; at Dido's death)

40) “The whole household was wild with grief around her, and their lamentations rang all through the palace. From there the report spread through the whole city and gloom was everywhere. Latinus went with his garments torn, dazed by the death of his wife and the downfall of his city” (Verg. *Aen.* 12.606-10; at Amata's suicide)

▪ metamorphosis: Circe's island passed but bestial enemies in Italy (see e.g. Aventinus' lion-skin and comparison of Messapus' men to swans); transformation in second half (esp. through Allecto); later Circe references (e.g. Aeneas receives as gifts horses which Circe had reared; Aeneas' enemies include those from the “ridge of Circe”)

41) “Neptune kept them from sailing into the harbour or coming near that deadly shore. He filled their sails with favouring winds and took them past the boiling breakers to safety.” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.21-4; Trojans avoid Circe's shores)

42) “The Trojans may escape the monsters of Circe, but they will not avoid the monsters into which the Italians will turn” (Hardie, ‘Augustan Poets and the Mutability of Rome’)

43) “Here too ... sat ... Picus himself, whose wife Circe, possessed by lust, struck him with her rod of gold and changed him with her potions into a bird...” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.187-191; Circe in Latinus' family tree)

Bibliography:

Anderson, W. S. 1957. ‘Vergil's Second *Iliad*’, *TAPA* 88: 17-20 (repr. S. Harrison, 1990. (ed.) *Oxford Readings*, 239-52)

Fraenkel, E. 1945. ‘Some Aspects of the Structure of Aeneid VII’, *Journal of Roman Studies* 35: 1-12

Hardie, P. 1992. ‘Augustan Poets and the Mutability of Rome’ in Anton Powell (ed.), *Roman Poetry and Propaganda in the Age of Augustus*

Hardie, P. 1993. *The Epic Successors of Virgil. A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition* (Cambridge).

Lowrie, M. 2009. *Writing, Performance, and Authority in Augustan Rome* (Oxford).

Lyne, R. O. A. M. 1987. *Further Voices in Virgil's Aeneid* (Oxford)

Putnam, M. C. J. 1970. ‘Aeneid VII and the Aeneid’ *American Journal of Philology* 91: 408-30.

Quint, D. 1989. ‘Repetition and Ideology in the Aeneid’, *Materiali e discussione* 23: 9-54; reworked in his *Epic and empire: politics and generic form from Virgil to Milton* (1993), ch. 2, 50-96.