

The Muses' Playground 10

The beginning of the war: *Aeneid* 7
and 8

Lecture overview

- Historical Italy; Latinus' kingdom and its union with Aeneas; historical/mythical Italy and contemporary history
- The outbreak of war: characters, intertexts and reader response
- The outbreak of war: descriptions of war in Italy; metaphors and their contemporary relevance

Aeneas, Troy and Rome

- The omen of eating the tables
 - Comic relief moment?
- Aeneas sacrificing to the gods: *'...and now pour libations from your goblets to Jupiter, call upon my father Anchises with your prayers and set the wine in due order on the tables.'*
- Continues the moulding of Trojan and Roman set up in Book 6



Latinus, Faunus, and Picus

- Latinus's origin tie him to religious cults still present in Rome in Vergil's day,
 - The Lupercalia festival (cf. *Ov. Fast.* 2)
- ...and connect him specifically to the values of the countryside
- *Simplicitas* – rejecting luxury while having just enough; a motif/ideal very present in the Augustan discourse
- He is a good counterpart to Aeneas (perhaps hampered here by his divine descent and royal lineage, and the pull luxury has been seen to have over him in Verg. *Aen.* 4)
- Implicitly, these characteristics carry over to the Trojans and Aeneas as well

Faunus, the lover of Nymphs who are fleeing,
may you pass gently over my boundaries,
my sunny fields, and, as you go by, be kind
to all my new-born,

if at the end of the year a tender kid
is sacrificed to you: if the full bowls of wine,
aren't lacking, friend of Venus: the old altar
smoking with incense.

All the flock gambols over the grassy plain,
when the fifth of December returns for you:
the festive village empties into the fields,
and the idle herd:

the wolf wanders among the audacious lambs:
for you the woods, wildly, scatter their leaves:
the ditcher delights in striking the soil he
hates, in triple time. (Hor. Carm. 3.18)

Links with contemporary Rome: Latinus and Evander

[...] This temple was their senate house, this the hall in which they held their sacred banquets [...] old Saturn, the image of Janus with his two faces [...] Many too were the weapons hung on the posts of the temple doors, captured chariots, curved axes, crests of helmets, great bolts from the gates of cities, spears, shield and beaks broken off the prows of ships. Here, too, with his short toga, and the augural staff of Quirinus in his left hand, sat the Horse-Tamer, Picus himself [...] (7.170-190)

- **Narrator comment:** What Roman power has now raised to the heights of the sky, in those days was a poor land ruled by Evander. (8.99f)
- His son Pallas was with him, and with him also were all the leading warriors and the senators (lit. *pauper senatus, poor senate*) (8.104f)
- Evander lists earlier contacts with Troy...
- ...and recounts the story of Hercules and Caucis, commemorated in the Ara Maxima in the Forum Boarium



Vergil's challenge

- 'How to paint [...] [t]he war in Latium as at once a civil war, a replay of the Trojan war, and a pre-enactment of historical Rome's fifth- and fourth-century Latin wars as well as the civil wars of the poet's own day?' (Mack, 1999, 131; cf. McKay, 1970, 147-193)

Effects?

- What are the effects of the descriptions of Latium and Evander's Rome?
- Reassuring the reader – familiar material – structuring device: the reader knows what ultimately will follow
- Increasingly moulding together of old Roman and Trojan customs and beliefs
 - Latinus through the cults
 - Evander through the fact that his Greek origins do not matter – the Trojan conflict is lessening its hold

Old and new: Juno

- First speech in 7.286-321 echoes Juno's speech of 1.37-49
- Second speech (appeal to Allecto) in 7.331-740 corresponds both to Juno's appeal to Aeolus and to her plotting with Venus in Book 1
 - Love and *furor* connected; cf. descriptions of Dido's love in Bks 1 and 4 and Juno's need for an agent: Cupid in Bk 1, Allecto from 7 onward
 - This the way in which love as a theme of the book(s) is signposted by the invocation of Erato (love poetry) at the opening of the book?
 - Erato mostly taken to be invoked as a source of poetic inspiration in general

Amata

- *Aen.* 7.363-4 Amata regards Aeneas as like Paris
- *Aen.* 7.372 Amata notes the Greek origins of Turnus
- *Aen.* 7.376-84 Amata is compared to a spinning top
- *Aen.* 7.385-405 Amata leads the women out in a Bacchic frenzy
- Clear correspondences to Dido
 - Govern reader response: Amata's approach is doomed
 - Picks up on 7.57: portents forbidding Lavinia being married to Turnus
- Clear correspondences to Beroe (impersonated by Iris) in 5.622-640
- These female characters illustrate how the *Aeneid* reinforces normative patterns of gendered behaviour
- All overstep traditional boundaries

Amata and Turnus

In that moment Allecto, gorged with the poisons of the Gorgons, went straight to Latium and the lofty palace [...] and settled on the quiet threshold of the chamber of Amata. There the queen was seething with womanly anger and disappointment at the arrival of the Trojans and the loss of the wedding with Turnus. Taking one of the snakes from her dark hair, the goddess Allecto threw it on Amata's breast to enter deep in her heart, a horror driving her to frenzy and bringing down her whole house in ruin. (7.341-345)

Here in his lofty palace in the darkness of midnight Turnus was lying deep in sleep. Allecto changed her appearance. No longer wild and raving, she took on the face of an old woman, with her brow furrowed by horrible wrinkles [Fake Cabyle's speech intended to incite his rage] Turnus was laughing as he made his reply to the priestess: 'You are wrong. The report has not failed to reach my ears. I know a fleet has sailed into the waters of the Thybris. Do not invent these fears for me. Royal Juno has not entirely forgotten us. It is old age and decay that cause you all this futile agitation and distress and make you barren of truth, taking a prophetess among warring kings and making a fool of her with false fears. Your duty is to guard the statues of the gods and their temples. Leave peace and war to men. War is the business of men.' (7.436-414)

Counterparts

- The proximity of these two passages encourage us to interpret them together
- How does the fact that we only get the briefest glimpse of Turnus before Allecto drives him mad affect our appreciation of his character?
 - The overlap between Allecto's speech and Turnus' own characteristics become more clear: looking most at the stubbornness
 - The fact that Turnus is, as much as Aeneas, a bouncy-ball in fate's hand becomes more clear: looking most at the difference and his calm
- The comparison to the immediately preceding description of Amata's rage, only heightened by Allecto, makes Turnus' reaction more prominent

Characterisation of Turnus

- The lust for battle raged within him, the criminal madness of war and, above all, anger. It was as though a heap of brushwood were crackling and burning under the sides of a bronze vessel, making the water seethe and leap up, a great river of it raging in the pot, with boiling foam spilling over and dense steam flying into the air. The peace was violated. (7.462-466)
- The Trojan hero, descendant of Laomedon, saw it all and great tides of grief flowed in his heart. His thoughts turned swiftly, now here, now there, darting in every possible direction and turning to every possible event, like light flickering from water in bronze vessels as it is reflected from the sun or its image the moon, now flying far and wide in all directions, now rising to strike the high coffers of a ceiling. (8.22-25)

Turnus and the other captains

- What difference does it make that Turnus is thrown head first into war while Aeneas and Latinus come prepared?
 - How are they prepared?
 - Prophecies
- What difference does it make that the reader will reach Book 7 having been repeatedly warned of ‘a new Achilles’?

Turnus in similes (*Aen.* 7-9)

- Similes are crucial tools in Vergil's characterisation of Turnus throughout
- The similes evoke the Homeric style...
 - Retardation
 - Often agricultural
- ...but the Vergilian similes are more closely tied to the development of the narrative
 - This is seen in Homer on occasion, but not consistently
 - The countryside as an *ideal* has a much stronger grip on the Roman mind than it does on the Greek
- 9.59-64 Simile comparing Turnus to a wolf attempting to enter a sheepfold
- 9.563-6 Simile comparing Turnus to an eagle carrying off a hare or a swan and a wolf
- 9.730 Simile comparing Turnus to a tiger amongst herds
- 9.792-6 Turnus compared to a lion in retreat

War and work

- Key intertext: Vergil, Georgics, Book 1, addressing the recent civil war
- Portents in nature highlighting the disastrous nature of the war;
- But also indicating the consequences of war:
And a time will come, when in those lands, the farmer labouring at the earth with curved plough, will come upon spears eaten by scabrous rust, or strike an empty helmet with his heavy hoe, and wonder at giant bones in the opened grave. (Verg. Georg. 493-497)
- Imagery present also in Ovid's *Heroides*, and Propertius *Elegies*
- 7.339: Shatter this peace they have agreed between them and **sow the seeds of recrimination and war.**
- **7.526:** They fought with two-edged steel, **and a dark crop of drawn swords sprouted all over the field** while bronze gleamed in answer to the challenge of the sun

Agriculture and war: Vergil's day?

- What effects does the combination of...
 - agricultural references and metaphors
 - and
 - strong reminiscences of the *Iliad*

...have here?
- The reader is more strongly encouraged to interpret the text in the light of contemporary times...
- ...but also to view contemporary history as heroic?
- *Aen.* 7.601-6 the gates of war – 'now observed by Rome' – references e.g. to the Parthian campaign
- *Aen.* 7.641-6 Invocation of the Muses at the start of the catalogue
- *Aen.* 8.8 Stirring up of war takes farmers from their fields

Changes to schedule

- There will be no lectures Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 March
- We will conclude the lecture series on Vergil with Books 9-12 on Thursday 10 March
- There will be no lecture Thursday 24 March
- We will catch up on two of these classes Tuesday 5 and Thursday 7 April; the final class will take place immediately after Easter break