

The Muses' Playground 11

Verg. *Aen.* 9-12

For next week's seminar

- Please prepare Ov. *Met.* 13 and 14
- Guidance questions will be posted on Moodle, focussing on differences and similarities to Vergil's *Aeneid*.

Lecture overview

- The battles
 - Vergil and the *Iliad*
 - Vergil and Italy
- Battles and anger
 - Turnus
 - Aeneas after Pallas' death
- The death of Turnus:
 - Intratextuality
 - Interpretational problems

The Battles

- ‘By the time we reach Book 10 we have read $\frac{3}{4}$ of this very long poem and we still have not yet seen what the first words of the epic promised us’ (Feeney, 1996, 178)
- A third of the *Aeneid* is devoted to descriptions of fighting (9-12):
 - To some extent, this is a genre framing
 - ...it means Vergil needs to engage very closely with the Homeric intertext but cannot impose too drastic changes on it
 - Homer has already varied the battle descriptions
 - This part of the *Aeneid* is more closely linked to Homer than any other
 - Let’s rehabilitate Aeneas: Military command an essential quality in any Roman leader
 - The Aeneas of the *Iliad* or the early books of Vergil have not yet proved himself in this capacity

Homer, Vergil and Battles

- The battle descriptions can also be mapped onto Rome's own history – the reader needs the correspondences
 - Cf. last lecture on wars in Italy reflected in the *Aeneid*
- The battles mostly closely resemble Homer's in terms of strategy, weapons and troops...
- ...but description of native troops particularly also include elements that are typically Roman and recognisable to the contemporary audience:
 - Signals for battle by trumpet: Etruscan or Latin troops
 - The trumpet supposedly an Etruscan invention
 - Cavalry: does not appear in Homer but is intrinsic to Roman warfare
 - Again provided primarily by native troops: the Arcadians (8.518; 10.364), Etruscans under Tarchon (11.598) vs. Camilla
 - ...but also note the introduction of skilled horsemanship in Book 5: the *Iudi Troiae*

Types of epic battles: the *aristeia*

- The *aristeia*: ‘account of an extended sequence of heroic deeds performed by one man’ (Heinze, 1993, 156)
 - Book 9: Turnus
 - Book 10: Aeneas, Pallas, Aeneas, Mezentius
 - Book 11: Camilla
 - Book 12: (most prominently) Turnus and Aeneas
- Vergil has mainly focussed action of this type on six characters, with only Turnus and Aeneas appearing in more than one book:
- Incorporating the generic marker of *aristeiai* while maintaining reader focus on the overarching narrative

Keeping to the red thread

- Recurring references to the Trojan war and Aeneas' battle as a repeat thereof:
 - 9.511 Trojans are accustomed to defend their walls –
 - 9.598-620 Numanus' speech: *'You have been sacked twice already, you Phrygians! Are you not ashamed to be cooped up again in a siege behind ramparts with only a wall between yourselves and death! You will not find here the sons of Atreus or the fictions and fine words of Ulixes! We are men of a hardy stock.'*
 - 9.742: *'You will soon be able to tell Priam that here too you found an Achilles'* (Turnus)
- Discussions between the gods also extend the trajectory of the story beyond the battlefields
 - Cf. 10.11-14 Jove's prophecy of the struggle between Rome and Carthage

Generic marker: Turnus

*I pray to you, Calliope, and
to your sister Muses, to
breathe upon me as I sing of
the death and destruction
wrought by the sword of
Turnus and to tell who sent
down to Orcus each warrior
that died. Unroll with me
now the mighty scroll of
war. (Aen. 9.525-529)*

- The invocation of the Muses underlines the intertextual engagement – this is epic territory!
- Raises the reader's appreciation of Turnus: cf. the need for a worthy opponent
- Turnus as a second Achilles – note the resonances of the *Iliad* here

Battles and character

- 'Homer's heroes do not really differ very much from each other on the battlefield; they have no special traits of character.' (Heinze, 1993, 166)
 - Differences are created through the type of fighting that they do
- Vergil employs his fighting scenes to underline his characterisation of individuals
- Similes for Turnus and Mezentius highly relevant here: rage and lack of self-restraint clear

Cf. again:

- 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

...but doesn't Aeneas too?

The death of Pallas

- Aeneas does go on a rampage after Pallas' death, e.g. *Aeneas confronted them all in his fury* (545)
 - Narrator comments in 10.501-505 indicate that important passage will follow?
 - Series of rejected pleas for mercy in 510-605
- ...but the appreciation of his behaviour is tempered by
 - the boastfulness of his opponents (e.g. Liger)
 - the use of similes:
 - 10.565-70 Aeneas compared to the giant Aegaeon who fought against Jove
 - 10.602f
 - Cross generational authority: references to Ascanius and to Anchises (534)
- *Everything that stood before him he harvested with the sword, cutting a broad swathe through the enemy ranks, and burning with rage as he looked for this Turnus flushed with slaughter. (Aen. 10.513f)*
- *So did the Trojan leader deal out death all over the plain like a raging torrent of water or a storm of black wind, until at last the young Ascanius and his warriors sallied forth and left the camp. The siege was lifted. (Aen. 10.602-605)*

On the similes

- The audience reminded of the crucial difference in goals:
- Personal rage/insult (Amata, Turnus) vs duty to the nation (Aeneas)
- The similes continually describe Turnus as a lone agent
- Similes, content, and direct character speech continually put Aeneas in the context of Troy/Rome
 - E.g. before the rampage at the close of Book 10: *Before his eyes he could see Pallas, Evander, everything, the table he had sat down to that day when he first came to their house, and the right hands of friendship they had given him.* (515-517)

Book 12

- Opening: renewal of the difference in objective of Aeneas and Turnus
 - Turnus: 45-53: personal;
 - Aeneas: 176-194: foundation of Lavinium
 - NB. 12.190f also alludes to clementia – cf. the final scene
- Increasing isolation of Turnus
 - Rejection of Latinus' offer of an out
 - Juturna in disguise: an indication that family allegiances are breaking down
 - Aeneas seeks Turnus alone
 - Amata's suicide (alluded to even in 12.55)

Aeneas and the others

- Contrast: Aeneas increasingly connected to others
 - E.g. comforts Iulus (110); appears with Iulus and captains (165-170); oath to Latinus
 - *'From me, my son, you can learn courage and hard toil. Others will teach you about Fortune. My hand will now defend you in war and lead you where the prizes are great. I charge you, when in due course your years ripen and you become a man, do not forget, but as you go over in your mind the examples of your kinsmen, let your spirits rise at the thought of your father Aeneas and your uncle Hector.'* (435-440)
 - Assistance from Venus in 554-556

Turnus: pulling back from the precipice?

- Recognises Iuturna in 632 onwards and resents the course his fate has taken
- Needed to protect homes and troops in Saces' speech
- *'In that one heart of his there seethed a bitter shame, a grief shot through with madness, love driven on by fury, and a consciousness of his own courage.'* (666-668): following fate
- *'Just as a boulder comes crashing down from the top of a mountain, torn out by gales, washed out by flood water or loosened by the stealthy passing of the years; it comes down the sheer face with terrific force, an evil mountain of rock, and bounds over the plain, rolling with it woods and flocks and men – so did Turnus crash through the scattered ranks'...* (684-690)
- No longer a lone agent: driven by fate
 - Essential preparation for our reading of Turnus in the final scene
- Turnus and Hector:
- Flight followed by the boulder episode: 'His knees gave way. His blood chilled and froze and the stone rolled away under its own impetus over the open ground between them [...] (

Turnus and the reader

- ‘Just as when we are asleep, when in the weariness of night rest lies heavy on our eyes, we dream we are trying desperately to run further and not succeeding, till we fall exhausted in the middle of our efforts; the tongue is useless; the strength we know we have fails our body; we have no voice, no words to obey our will – so it was with Turnus.’ (12.907-913)

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- The futility of his efforts
- The strength we know we have: Could Turnus have been different?
- No voice: victors write history
- No words: reminder that Turnus has been spoken for throughout – we rarely see him unaffected by external driving forces

‘None of it need have happened’

- An epic trying to get on with the epic? Metapoetic reflection on the delay:
 - Juno: ‘What are you waiting for?’ 9.12f
 - Narrator: invocation to Calliope 9.525-528 an attempt to restart?
 - Jupiter: The time will come for war – there is no need to hasten it – when barbarous Carthage will let destruction loose upon the citadels of Rome [...] But now let it be. (10.11-15)
- As a whole, Vergil’s poem highlights the tragedy of war:
 - Victory from the view point of the defeated
 - Connected to contemporary history and descriptions of the civil war as regrettable
- Feeney: Vergil’s structure asks the reader whether we would have wanted to read that alternative narrative, and why we like reading about violence