

The Muses' Playground: Italy in the *Aeneid*

A) Romans before the Roman state

- Catalogue of the Etruscans, 10.163-214: only 3 (Abas; Aulestes; Asilas) out of 8 reappear. Why?; the importance of the Etruscan seer, Asilas. Races > Romans

1) "Nor could I pass over Cunarus..., the leader of the Ligurians, nor Cupavo with his small band of fighting men." (Verg. *Aen.* 10.185-6: gets one and half lines)

2) "The third ship was sailed by Asilas, the great mediator between gods and men, master of the stars of the sky and the entrails of the beasts of the fields, of bird cries and the prescient fires of lightning." (Verg. *Aen.* 10.175-7)

3) "With the exception of their religious lore, the Etruscans' function in the poem and in history is to be swallowed up, along with the other Italians and the Trojans themselves, as part of the process of Romanization: that is why they are under the command of a foreigner and that is why their parade turns out to be a narratorial damp squib. The continual amalgamation of diverse groups into a ceaselessly evolving Roman *civitas* is one of the great themes of Roman history and therefore one of the great themes of the *Aeneid*." (Feeney, 1999: 192)

- Trojans, Etruscans, Latins: divided then, unified now; quasi-civil war

4) "the Latins turned and rode back towards the city walls driven by the Trojan squadrons under Asilas" (Verg. *Aen.* 11.618-20)

5) "There too ... the leaders hovered ... Mnestheus brave Asilas and Messapus, tamer of horses, son of Neptune." (Verg. *Aen.* 12.125-8)

6) "All the Latins and all the Trojans- Mnestheus and bold Serestus, Messapus,..., and brave Asilas- the battalion of Etruscans and the Arcadian squadrons of Evander were striving ... waging this immense conflict with no rest and no respite." (Verg. *Aen.* 12.548-553)

- Italy at war even before Aeneas' arrival (plundering; Arcadians v Latins; Etruria v Mezentius) despite ideas of peace and Golden age

7) "Our men endure hard labour and live spare, subduing the land with the mattock and shaking the towns of their enemies with war ... We crush our grey hair into the helmet, and our delight is always to bring home new plunder and live off what we take." (Numanus Remulus, Verg. *Aen.* 9.607-13)

8) "This people [the Arcadians] wages continual war with the Latin race. Welcome them into your camp as your allies. Make a treaty with them." (Tiber to Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 8.55-6)

9) 'If only Jupiter would give me back the years that are past,' he cried, 'when I laid low ...the enemy's battle line under the very walls of Praeneste, heaping up their shields...' (Evander, Verg. *Aen.* 8.560-2)

10) "at last his subjects reached the end of their endurance and took up arms against him

[Mezentius] ... he himself escaped and took refuge in the and of the Rutulians under the protection of the armies of his guest friend, Turnus. At this the whole of Etruria rose in righteous fury and has now come in arms to demand that Mezentius be given up for punishment.” (Verg. *Aen.* 8.489-95)

11) “King Latinus ... had *reigned over* the countryside and *the cities for many peaceful years* (*urbes ... longa placidas in pace regebat*)” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.45-6)

12) “His [Saturn’s] reign was what men call the Golden Age, *such was the peace and serenity of the people under his rule. (sic placida populos in pace regebat)*” (Verg. *Aen.* 8.324-5, Saturn's reign in Latium)

- Aeneas as a kind of harmonizer BUT history of Italian strife e.g. Social wars of 91-87 BC (Italian allies v Rome); Augustus as true harmonizer figure (shutting gates of war; Golden age)

13) “The whole of Italy of its own free will swore allegiance to me and demanded me as the leader in the war in which I was victorious at Actium.” (Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 25; tr. P. A. Brunt and J. M. Moore)

14) “In Hesperia,... there was a custom, later inherited and revered in the cities of Alba, and now observed by Rome ... when men first rouse Mars for battle There are two gates known as the Gates of War ... When the Fathers are resolved on war, the consul himself ...unbars the doors.” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.601-13; Juno opens *Aen.* 7.620-22)

15) “Here is the man whose coming you so often hear prophesied, here he is, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, the man who will bring back the golden years to the fields of Latium once ruled over by Saturn” (Verg. *Aen.* 6.791-4)

B) Mingling of Trojans and Italians

- Roman state’s greatness requires blending of Trojans and Italians. Italy: good land and warrior stock (NB ancient belief in races shaped by environment)

16) “You will see that the people who arise from this admixture of Ausonian blood will be above all men, above the gods, in devotion and no other race will be their equals in paying you honour.” (Jupiter to Juno, Verg. *Aen.* 12.838-40)

17) “There is a place- Greeks call it Hesperia- an ancient land, strong in arms and in the richness of her soil.” (Verg. *Aen.* 3.163-4)

- symbolic geography. Italy (Calabria): first conflict, then peace and victory; Carthage: seems welcoming but hints of tragedy; only war; laurel at Latinus’ palace: peace, religion

18) “a harbour opened up before us growing nearer ... till we could see the temple of Minerva on the citadel...The harbour was shaped like a bow... The rocks at the mouth were foaming with salt spray but the harbour lay tucked away behind. Towering rocks on either side stretched down their arms to form a double wall and the temple stood well back from the shore.” (first sight of Italy: Trojans sailing into Calabria, Verg. *Aen.* 3.530-6)

19) “The first omen I saw here was four horses ... and my father Anchises interpreted it: ‘This land that receives us is promising us war! Men arm horses for war and so this troop of horses means threat of war. Yet at other times they are harnessed to chariots and accept reins under the yoke in harmony. There is hope of peace also.’” (Verg. *Aen.* 3.537-40)

20) “Rock cliffs are everywhere. A great pinnacle threatens the sky on either side, and beneath all this the broad water lies still and safe. At the end of the bay there rises a backcloth [*scaena*] of shimmering trees, a dark wood with quivering shadows, looming over the water, and there ..., is a cave ... a home for the nymphs, with fresh spring water... Here there is no need of chains to moor the weary ships, or of anchors with hooked teeth to hold them fast.” (Verg. *Aen.* 1.162-9, harbour at Carthage)

21) “There was a wooded grove When first the Phoenicians had been driven there.. Juno ... had led them to this spot where they had dug up the head of a spirited stallion. This was a sign that from generation to generation they would be a race glorious in war and would have no difficulty in finding fields to graze.” (Verg. *Aen.* 1.441-5, horse portent)

22) “Deep in the innermost courtyard ... there stood a laurel tree. Its foliage was sacred and it had been preserved ... for many years, ever since Father Latinus himself had found it... when he was building his first citadel, and dedicated it to Phoebus Apollo, naming the settlers after it, the Laurentines.” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.59-63: laurel associated with peace and venerability)

- Trojans: military prowess; religious devotion; laws and culture. Latins may benefit from civilising and Trojans may lose decadence associated with their race (Paris; Laomedon)

23) “the young warriors from Laomedon’s Troy” (Aeneas' men, Verg. *Aen.* 7.105)

24) “the Trojan hero, descendant of Laomedon” (of Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 8.18)

C) Trojans (esp. Aeneas) as Italian

- foreigners but common ancestry of Trojans and Italians (Dardanus): Aeneas returning home. Aeneas’ Italian nationality suggested e.g. through imagery (Apennines; Italian hunting hound) (contrast Turnus, like Mars in Thrace, Thracian wind, Punic lion: enemy of Italy)

25) “Strangers will come to be your sons-in-law and by their blood to raise our name to the stars.” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.98-9)

26) “This is our true home. This is where Dardanus sprang from and his father Iasius from whom our race took its beginning.” (penates to Aeneas of Italy, Verg. *Aen.* 3.167-8)

27) “I myself remember that the ... elders used to say ... that Dardanus was born in these fields and went far away to the cities of Ida in Phrygia and the Thracian island of Samos... He set out from here, from ... Corythus” (Latinus to Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 7.205-9)

28) “O you who are born of the race of the gods, who are bringing back to us the city of Troy..., long have we waited for you in the land of the Laurentines and the fields of Latium.” (Tiber to Aeneas, Verg. *Aen.* 8.36-8)

29) “Huge he was as ... Father Appenninus himself roaring when the holm-oaks shimmer on

his flanks and delighting to raise his snowy head into the winds.” (Aeneas compared to Italian mountain range, Verg. *Aen.* 12.701-3)

30) “It is wrong, we hear, for ..Turnus to take his stand in the land of his fathers, Turnus, whose grandfather was Pilumnus and whose mother was the goddess Venilia.” (Juno of Turnus' Italian parentage, Verg. *Aen.* 10.74-6)

31) “Just as a lion in the fields round Carthage, who does not move into battle till he has received a great wound in his chest from the hunters” (Verg. *Aen.* 12.4-6)

32) “An overall impression is created throughout the *Aeneid* that Aeneas is truly an Italian, not only by descent, but also because of his concern with the welfare of Italy. Similarly Turnus, although an Italian by birth, behaves like an alien Greek and, heedless of Italy's welfare, promotes there a war which ought to have ended long before at Troy.” (Cairns 1989: 123).

D) Italians as immigrants esp. Greeks

- Book 7 catalogue shows Greek connections of Italians (Aventinus son of Greek Hercules; Catillus and Coras from Argive colony of Tibur; Halaesus one of Agamemnon's men); Turnus from Ardea, city founded by Greek Danae (and casts himself as Greek); Evander and people from Arcadia; Etruscans originally from Lydia; Pelasgians originally from Greece; Greek Diomedes settles in Italy after Trojan war; Saturn exile from Olympus

33) “their own Latin blood would be adulterated by Phrygians” (Turnus' claim, Verg. *Aen.* 7.579)

34) “Danae is said to have been driven on to this coast by southern gales and to have founded this city for settlers who were subjects of her father Acrisius, king of Argos. Our ancestors ...gave it the name of Ardea” (Verg. *Aen.* 7.409-12)

35) “if you were to trace the house of Turnus back to its first beginnings, his forefathers were Inachus and Acrisius of Argos and his home is in the heart of Mycenae.” (Amata, Verg. *Aen.* 7. 371-2)

36) “The sons of Atreus are not the only ones who have suffered, and the people of Mycenae are not the only men who can take up arms.” (Turnus identifying with Agamemnon and Menelaus, Verg. *Aen.* 9.138-9)

37) “O noblest of the race of the Greeks” (*Aen.* 8.127)

38) “site of Agylla, founded long ago on its ancient rock by the warlike Lydians who settled there on the ridges of the Etruscan mountains.” (Verg. *Aen.* 8.479-59)

- precedent for mixing and assimilation (for Aeneas and Italian tribes under Roman state). NB Italy's changing names

39) “Then bands of Ausonians arrived and Sicanian peoples, and the land of Saturn lost its name many times.” (Verg. *Aen.* 8.328-9)

E) Civil war

- civil war (part of history: cf. Saturn expelled by brother and Romulus/Remus): symbolically (races will unite) and actually (Etruscans shown fighting each other e.g. Mezentius kills Acron)

40) “You can take brothers who love each other and set them at each other’s throats.” (Juno to Allecto, Verg. *Aen.* 7.335)

41) “he was at the head of a thousand men who had followed him and followed him in vain from the city of Agylla.” (Lausus, Verg. *Aen.* 7.652-3)

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