

THE ENIGMA OF TURNUS:
CONTRADICTORY CHARACTERIZATIONS IN VERGIL'S *AENEID*

by

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(Under the Direction of Sarah Spence)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the character Turnus in Vergil's *Aeneid* first by exploring the character in pre-Vergilian versions of the story, then by identifying and analyzing four areas of contradiction in Vergil's characterization of Turnus: *pietas* versus *furor* as the dominant force in Turnus, Greek versus Latin ethnicity, conflicting allusions to Homeric characters, and conflicting allusions to historical persons.

INDEX WORDS: Vergil, Aeneid, Turnus, Aeneas, Ira, Intertextuality,
Characterization, Pietas, Furor

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTERS	
1 THE PRE-VERGILIAN TURNUS	5
2 VERGIL'S CONTRADICTIONARY CHARACTERIZATION OF TURNUS IN THE <i>AENEID</i>	16
3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TURNUS' CONTRADICTIONARY CHARACTERIZATION	42
CONCLUSION.....	62
WORKS CITED	67

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: An Abbreviated Stemma of the Inachid Family.....	61

INTRODUCTION

This project began as a character study of Turnus, intended to trace the character from his earliest appearance in literature through the *Aeneid*. I expected to find a rather straightforward character, a noble but arrogant warrior modeled after the warriors of the *Iliad* whose proud refusal to submit to the fated rise of the Roman people in Italy results in his death at the hands of Aeneas, Rome's fated founder. After all, Vergil's description of Turnus in the parade of Latin heroes in Book 7 seems to suggest reading Turnus as a proud Homeric-style champion:

Ipse inter primos praestanti corpore Turnus
vertitur arma tenens et toto vertice supra est.¹

Turnus himself, among the leaders, with his outstanding body, turns himself
holding his weapons and is a full head taller than them.²

After surveying scholarly opinion on Turnus, however, I discovered no simple antagonist but rather a complex character upon whom no two scholars could agree. Some read the text of the *Aeneid* as strongly vilifying Turnus, to the extent that Viktor Pöschl calls him a “dark demon of passion,”³ and Michael Putnam refers to his “animal nature,” calling Turnus “the personification of violence.”⁴ Other critics read Turnus with a much more sympathetic eye. W. R. Johnson attempts to read the events of the latter half of the poem from Turnus' perspective and concludes that Turnus' anger is justified and even patriotic,⁵ while W. A. Camps argues that Turnus ought

¹ *Aen.* 7.783-784.

² All translations are my own.

³ Viktor Pöschl, *The Art of Vergil: Image and Symbol in the “Aeneid,”* trans. Gerda Seligson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), 15.

⁴ Michael C. J. Putnam, *The Poetry of the “Aeneid”* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 186-189.

⁵ W. R. Johnson, “Introduction,” *Vergil: Aeneid*, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 2005), xxxvii-xli.

not to be held responsible for his actions because he acts without free will and moreover “is no more conceived as an antipathetic character than is Achilles in the *Iliad*.”⁶

It seemed strange at first that scholars could arrive at such diametrically opposed readings, but by looking at the passages the critics were citing in making their judgments I discovered that Vergil changes his characterization of Turnus at two key points in the narrative: the visit of Allecto and the appearance of the Dira. Before Allecto enrages Turnus in Book 7, he appears to be a fairly rational character. Allecto was not the first to tell him of Aeneas’ landing, nor of Latinus’ decision to give Lavinia to Aeneas in marriage, yet Turnus had not yet decided to wage war on the Trojans. In fact, he is very resistant to the idea of war until Allecto reveals herself in all her supernatural horror and violently drives Turnus mad with rage by thrusting her torch into his breast. This supernaturally induced *furor* changes Turnus from a proud young noble into the “dark demon of passion” Pöschl describes. This characterization lasts until Book 12, after Juno has renounced *furor* and Jupiter sends the Dira to weaken Turnus before the final duel. After that scene, Vergil no longer describes Turnus as wrathful and he appears to become once again the young noble from Book 7 who knows he is no match for Aeneas and begs for mercy, resulting in the loss of free will Camps uses as a base for his sympathetic reading of Turnus.

After having thus realized the amazing complexity of Turnus, I reformulated my investigation. A complete character study of Turnus was proving to be frustratingly disjointed, given the fundamental changes I had already recognized in Books 7 and 12. Eventually I realized that the contradictions which were frustrating me were more interesting than the internally consistent character I was chasing after. This led me to seek new answers from the

⁶ W. A. Camps, *An Introduction to Vergil's "Aeneid"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 39.

text: How does Vergil transform a fairly uncomplicated antagonist into such an enigma? What purpose does the enigmatic nature of Turnus serve in the *Aeneid*?

To answer the question of how Vergil transformed the character, I needed to reconstruct the pre-Vergilian Turnus using the sources that were available to Vergil. The first chapter of this thesis looks at fragments of Cato's *Origines* (the only extant literary source before the age of Augustus which mentions Turnus) then turns to Vergil's contemporaries, Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, since we can reasonably assume that the sources available to them were also available to Vergil.

After reconstructing the pre-Vergilian Turnus, I was ready to investigate exactly why Turnus is such a problematic figure in the *Aeneid*. I discovered that Vergil's characterizations of Turnus seem to contradict one another and I identified four significant contradictions. The first two deal with Vergil's direct descriptions of Turnus: first that Turnus is motivated both by *pietas* and *furor*, and second that Vergil portrays Turnus as both Greek and Latin. The second two contradictions occur in Vergil's use of literary and historical allusions: he uses the former to connect Turnus to at least three different characters from the *Iliad*—Achilles, Hector and the Iliadic Aeneas—and uses the latter to connect him both to heroes of the Roman Republic—Horatius Cocles and Decius Mus—and to one of Rome's most notorious enemies—Hannibal. One could doubtless find other contradictions in Vergil's characterization of Turnus, but these four seem most central and most significant because all four play into the highly ambiguous end of the *Aeneid*. Both pessimistic and optimistic interpretations of the *Aeneid* depend on whether or not Aeneas is justified in killing Turnus at the end of the poem. Therefore the fact that Vergil blurs the boundary between *pietas* and *furor*, plays with ethnic identities, and throws both Homeric and historical allusions into confusion makes these four contradictions stand out as the

most significant in his contradictory characterization of Turnus. The second chapter of this thesis identifies these contradictions and pinpoints passages which illustrate the competing characterizations of Turnus.

The second question concerning the function of the four contradictions about Turnus I have identified in the *Aeneid* is harder to answer and more speculative than the first. Some of the contradictions, like the mixture of *pietas* and *furor* in Turnus, find explanation through comparison between Turnus and the epic's protagonist, Aeneas. For others, the answers are more complicated and remain enigmatic. The third chapter explores the significance of the contradictions in Turnus' characterization.

CHAPTER 1

THE PRE-VERGILIAN TURNUS

Before we can understand and explore Vergil's choices for Turnus, we must first reconstruct the characterization of Turnus in Vergil's sources, establishing what Vergil had to work with when he crafted his own version. This first chapter, therefore, will begin with an investigation of the earlier material. Turnus did figure in pre-Vergilian versions of the Aeneas myth, at least from the time of Cato, but was neither important nor three-dimensional; as C. J. Mackie notes, there is a "comparative lack of detail in these sources."⁷ Nevertheless, a survey of Vergil's sources will enrich our understanding both of the character Turnus and of Vergil's innovations. Therefore we begin our survey with Cato, our earliest literary source for Turnus. We will then proceed to look at Vergil's contemporaries, the historians Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, for the competing versions of the story that they preserve. This survey will include a discussion of the character Turnus Herdonius, attested by both Dionysius and Livy, and will show that Turnus Herdonius most likely derives from the Turnus of the Aeneas legend.

The first clear reference to Turnus as a character in the Aeneas story appears in Cato's *Origines*.⁸ The two relevant fragments of Cato (9a and 10), excerpted in Servius, are reproduced below:

⁷ C. J. Mackie, "Turnus and His Ancestors," *Classical Quarterly* 41 (1991): 264. Mackie attributes this lack of detail to the fact that in the extant pre-Vergilian accounts, Mezentius and the Etruscans are the more important antagonists.

⁸ Cato himself may have invented the character Turnus (as well as Amata and Mezentius), but R. M. Ogilvie argues against this, inferring that Cato's inclusion of the story of Aeneas' landing and battle against the native inhabitants indicates that the episode was commonly accepted by his time. See Ogilvie, *A Commentary on Livy, Books 1-5* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 40. For an opposing view, see Jan N. Bremmer and Nicholas M. Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography* (London: University of London, 1987), 22.

Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 1.267: secundum Catonem historiae hoc habet fides: Aeneam cum patre ad Italiam venisse et propter invasos agros contra Latinum Turnumque pugnassee, in quo proelio periit Latinus. Turnum postea ad Mezentium confugisse eiusque fretum auxilio bella renovasse, quibus Aeneas Turnusque pariter rapti sunt.

According to Cato, the truth of the story is that Aeneas came to Italy with his father and fought against Latinus and Turnus on account of their fields having been invaded, in which battle Latinus died. Turnus afterwards fled to Mezentius and relying on his help renewed the conflict, in which Aeneas and Turnus were equally carried off.

Serv. *ad Verg. Aen.* 4.620: Cato dicit iuxta Laurolavinium cum Aeneae socii praedas agerent, proelium commissum, in quo Latinus occisus est, fugit Turnus: et Mezentii auxilio comparato renovavit proelium, quo victus quidem est ab Aenea; qui tamen [Aeneas] in ipso proelio non comparuit. Ascanius vero postea Mezentium interemit.⁹

Cato says that when the allies of Aeneas were driving booty to Laurolavinium, a battle was joined in which Latinus was killed. Turnus fled and renewed the battle after Mezentius' help had been procured, in which he was indeed killed by Aeneas, who nevertheless in that very battle disappeared. But Ascanius afterwards killed Mezentius.

From these fragments, the basic plot is evident: Aeneas and Anchises both reach Italy where (according to fr. 8)¹⁰ they receive a land grant from Latinus but peace is broken when Aeneas invades Latin territory. War ensues between Aeneas and Latinus, who is allied with Turnus. Latinus dies in the first confrontation, leaving Turnus in charge. Turnus flees to Mezentius and with his help renews the war, leading to a confrontation in which both Aeneas and Turnus die, leaving the rest of the war to be fought between Ascanius and Mezentius. Note that in Cato's version Aeneas is clearly the aggressor in the confrontation. Indeed, war breaks out only because Aeneas, invading the lands of the king kind enough to grant him land in the first place,

⁹ The Latin text for these fragments is taken from Martine Chassignet, ed., *Les Origines (Fragments)* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1986), 4-5. In addition to fragments 9a and 10, fragment 11 (likewise reported by Servius) also relates to Turnus, but is of dubious authenticity due to its similarity to Livy *Epon.* 1.2.1. Nicholas M. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 280, argues from a linguistic standpoint that the Livy passage has to predate the fragment and that Servius is mistaken in assigning it to Cato.

¹⁰ Chassignet, ed., 4.

attempts to enlarge the territory he was given. Turnus and Latinus seem to have been allies at the time of Aeneas' arrival, and Turnus' retaliation against Aeneas seems justified in that context. Also worth noting is that in this earliest written version Turnus and Aeneas are not the final arbiters of the war between Trojans and Italians since both *rapti sunt* in their decisive battle and Mezentius and Ascanius are left to enact the final duel.¹¹

The other pre-Vergilian accounts of the Aeneas story do not mention Turnus by name, but given their extremely fragmentary state one ought not to read too much into this omission. Interesting variations do emerge when we examine other versions of the Aeneas story contemporaneous with Vergil, primarily those of the historians Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. These variations prove that the version of the Aeneas legend which Vergil crafted from his source material was only one of several competing versions in the first century BC. Since Livy and Dionysius were both composing prose history, as opposed to verse narrative, we may presume that the stories they tell are for the most part derived from other sources and are not purely works of their own creation. For this reason we turn to Livy and Dionysius to illuminate how Turnus might have been portrayed in alternative versions of the Aeneas narrative, now lost, which were available as source material both for them and for Vergil.

Livy's account of the war between Aeneas and Turnus preserves two versions of the story. The first is rather short and states simply that Aeneas came to Italy and defeated Latinus in a war which ended in a new alliance:

Duplex inde fama est. Alii proelio victum Latinum pacem cum Aenea, deinde adfinitatem iunxisse tradunt¹²

¹¹ It is strange that the same verb is used to describe the fate of both men. In isolation, *raptus est* might be taken to mean that Aeneas was taken up to the heavens to assume divine status, but the use of this verb for Turnus makes that reading unlikely. The verb seems simply to indicate death, then, and we may conclude that Aeneas does not enjoy apotheosis in this early version of the story.

¹² Livy *Epon.* 1.1.6.

Then there is a double story. Some report that Latinus, defeated in battle, made peace and then a marriage treaty with Aeneas.

The second describes Aeneas landing at Italy and immediately making a treaty with Latinus, which gave him the right to build a city (Lavinium) and to take Latinus' daughter as his wife. This treaty angers Turnus, king of the Rutuli,¹³ who had previously been engaged to Latinus' daughter. Turnus declares war on both Latinus and Aeneas, losing the first battle but managing to kill Latinus before being routed. Turnus then flees to Mezentius, king of the Etruscans, who agrees to lend his aid in war. Aeneas meanwhile persuades the reluctant Latins to continue to support him despite their fear of the Etruscans. The Latins, having decided to follow Aeneas, are victorious over the forces of Turnus and Mezentius, although Aeneas dies in the final battle.¹⁴ In this version, as in Cato's rendition, Latinus dies in the first battle and Aeneas subsequently dies in the same battle as Turnus. Likewise, in both Mezentius survives and he concludes the war with Ascanius. Livy's version, however, unlike Cato's, gives a negative portrayal of Turnus. Turnus disrupts the peace between Aeneas and Latinus out of jealousy and stirs up Etruscan foreigners against his fellow Latins, as is clear from the following excerpt:

Bello deinde Aborigines Troianique simul petiti. Turnus rex Rutulorum, cui pacta Lavinia ante adventum Aeneae fuerat, praelatum sibi advenam aegre patiens simul Aeneae Latinoque bellum intulerat. Neutra acies laeta ex eo certamine abiit: victi Rutuli: victores Aborigines Troianique ducem Latinum amisere. Inde Turnus Rutulique diffisi rebus ad florentes opes Etruscorum Mezentiumque regem eorum confugiunt, qui Caere opulento tum oppido imperitans, iam inde ab initio minime laetus novae origine urbis et tum nimio plus quam satis tutum esset accolis rem Troianam crescere ratus.¹⁵

Then the Aborigines and Trojans both demanded war. Turnus, the king of the Rutuli, to whom Lavinia had been betrothed before the arrival of Aeneas, suffering with rage that a foreigner had been preferred to himself, waged war against both Aeneas and Latinus simultaneously. Neither side went away happy

¹³ Ogilvie, 220, describes the Rutuli as a Latin people whose capital city was Ardea (25 miles south of Rome). Their historicity can be demonstrated by their attested membership in the Latin League of Aricia.

¹⁴ Livy *Epon.* 1.1.7-1.2.6.

¹⁵ Livy *Epon.* 1.2.1-3.

from that battle: the Rutuli were conquered, the victorious Aborigines and Trojans lost their leader Latinus. Then Turnus and the Rutuli, having no confidence in their own means, fled to the blossoming wealth of the Etruscans and Mezentius their king, who was ruling over Caere, an opulent town at that time. Now from the beginning he was less than pleased at the rise of a new city and by that time he thought that the Trojan settlement was increasing more quickly than would be sufficiently safe for its neighbors.

Strangely, R. M. Ogilvie glosses over many of the apparent differences between Livy's and Cato's versions and says that the only "significant idiosyncrasy" is one of genealogy, which occurs outside the passage above.¹⁶ The above passage highlights another "idiosyncrasy" which seems very significant: Turnus and Aeneas have switched sides! Aeneas has become the loyal ally of the aged king and it is Turnus who attacks and his army which is responsible for Latinus' death. This narrative choice shows a clear step in the direction of an heroic Aeneas and a villainous Turnus and is thus closer to Vergil's own narrative choices.

A second historian contemporary with Vergil, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, provides yet another version of the Aeneas story. As Jerzy Linderski points out, his version is important because it "represents the pre-Augustan layer of Roman mythology of the *origines*."¹⁷ Since the versions of Cato and Livy differ significantly from that of Dionysius there must have been more than just two layers to the mythology of Roman *origines*; nevertheless Dionysius certainly represents one of these layers and so is valuable in demonstrating different characterizations of Turnus in the tradition. As a Greek historian, Dionysius provides insight into what changes the story underwent in the process of being retold to a Greek audience in a Greek-speaking world increasingly in the shadow of Rome. In Dionysius' version both the Latins and the Trojans are descended from Greeks and Aeneas appears to represent some kind of Hellenic heroism. Indeed, Aeneas in Dionysius speaks as if the Trojan War were a civil dispute between Greek city-states:

¹⁶ Ogilvie, 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

ἀπεκρίνατο Αἰνείας· “ἡμεῖς γένος μὲν Τρωῆς ἔσμεν, πόλεως δὲ οὐ τῆς ἀφανεστάτης ἐν Ἑλλήσιν ἐγενόμεθα” . . . ὥς δὲ ταῦτα ὁ Λατίνος ἤκουσεν ἀπεκρίνατο πρὸς αὐτόν· “ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ γε εὖ νοιᾶν τε πρὸς ἅπαν τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν γένος ἔχω”¹⁸

Aeneas answered: “We are the people of Troy, not the least well-known city among the Greeks . . .” When Latinus heard these things he replied to him: “But I am well-disposed towards the whole Greek race.”

After a series of wanderings, Aeneas arrives in Italy. The news of his arrival disturbs King Latinus and he breaks off war against the Rutuli to investigate. Due largely to Aeneas’ cleverness in speaking, Latinus is persuaded to ally his people with the Trojans and to give Aeneas land and his daughter in marriage. Turnus,¹⁹ who in this version is the nephew of Latinus’ wife Amata, is upset at the marriage between Lavinia and Aeneas and is stirred to rage at the prodding of Queen Amata, who encourages him to defect to the Rutuli. Once he declares his intent to the Rutuli they immediately make him their leader and declare war on Latinus:

ἀπέστησαν γὰρ αὐθις ἀπὸ τοῦ Λατίνου Ῥοτολοι λαβόντες ἡγεμόνα τῶν αὐτομόλων τινὰ τῆς Λατίνου γυναικὸς Ἀμάτας ἀνεψιὸν ὄνομα Τυρρηνόν. ὁ δὲ ἀνὴρ οὗτος ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ τῆς Λαουινίας τὸν κηδεστὴν μεμφόμενος, ὅτι παρελθὼν τὸ συγγενὲς ὀθνεῖοις ἐκήδευσεν, τῆς τε Ἀμάτας παροξυνούσης καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν συλλαμβανόντων, ἄγων τὴν δύναμιν ἧς αὐτὸς ἦρχε προστίθεται τοῖς Ῥοτόλοις.²⁰

For the Rutuli had revolted again against Latinus, selecting as their leader one of the deserters whose name was Tyrrhenos [Turnus], a nephew of Amata, the wife of Latinus. Leading a force over which he himself ruled, this man had joined himself to the Rutuli, blaming his uncle [Latinus] for the marriage of Lavinia because he had made a marriage alliance with foreigners while passing over his own kinsmen, and with Amata spurring him on and with some others encouraging him.

¹⁸ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.58.

¹⁹ The Dionysius manuscript actually has “Τυρρηνός” (the Greek word for “an Etruscan”) in place of the name “Turnus.” Earnest Cary suggests that this is just as likely the result of scribal error as it is that Dionysius considered the two names to be equivalent. He notes that Turnus Herdonius’ name later in the *Antiquities* was also corrupted (to Τύρδος) in the manuscript. In any case, Dionysius does not appear to consider Turnus Etruscan, since he identifies him as nephew of the Latin queen Amata. See Earnest Cary, ed., *The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 211-212.

²⁰ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.64.1-2.

In the ensuing battle, Turnus and Latinus are both slain and a period of peace follows. The Latins are forced to defend themselves again three years later, however, when Mezentius, king of the Etruscans, declares war on the Latins, who are now one people with the Trojans. Mezentius is moved to war because he feels threatened by the increasing “Greek” power in the region:

ἤδη γὰρ ἐπ’ μέγα χωροῦσαν τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν ὀρώων δύναμιν ἤχθετο.²¹

For now he was vexed seeing Greek power greatly increasing.

In the battle that follows, Aeneas disappears; Dionysius indicates general uncertainty whether he died or was assumed into the heavens:

τὸ δὲ Αἰνείου σῶμα φανερόν οὐδαμῇ γεγόμενον οἱ μὲν εἰς θεοὺς μεταστῆναι εἵκαζον, οἱ δ’ ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ παρ’ ὃν ἡ μάχη ἐγένετο, διαφθάρηναι.²²

And when the body of Aeneas was nowhere to be seen, some conjectured that he had gone over to the gods, but others guessed that he was killed in the river alongside which the battle had occurred.

The war continues until Ascanius convinces Mezentius to submit to a truce and lay aside his hatred for the Latins.²³ In this version Turnus has been vilified even more than in Livy’s account. As in Livy, Turnus is a traitor who betrays his country out of jealousy, but here it is not even his own idea—he does so at the urging of a woman dabbling in political affairs. On the other hand, Aeneas is portrayed in overwhelmingly positive terms, with his roles as treaty-maker and city-founder, both sacred tasks, emphasized and his apotheosis suggested. It is interesting to observe how a Hellenic heritage for both the Latins and the Trojans is invented and this heritage is then contrasted to that of the native Etruscans, who are both envious and fearful of the Greeks. Linderski comments that Dionysius’ efforts to make Rome “ultimately a Greek city” would be “heresy” to the Romans of the Augustan age; since Dionysius claims to have consulted sources,

²¹ *Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom.* 1.64.4.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom.* 1.53-65.

however, it is reasonable to suppose that at least some of his predecessors came close to this conclusion, even if we grant that Dionysius may have been the first to draw the connection so boldly.²⁴

The narratives of Livy and Dionysius suggest that by the first century, the various versions of the story of Aeneas' deeds in Italy were for the most part in agreement with each other and with the earlier version preserved by Cato. The basic narrative of this story is that Aeneas arrives in Italy and manages to convince Latinus to give him land on which to settle his Trojan followers. A war breaks out, and Aeneas and Turnus become the leaders of the opposing sides. Latinus dies early on in this war. At some point, King Mezentius of the Etruscans becomes involved on the side opposing Aeneas. Both Aeneas and Turnus die (or "disappear," which for Aeneas could suggest apotheosis) in battle, leaving the ultimate conclusion of the war to Ascanius and Mezentius. Cato, Livy and Dionysius differ, however, in their characterizations of Aeneas, Latinus and Turnus. In Cato, Aeneas is the aggressor in the war and Turnus and Latinus remain allies until Latinus' death, as opposed to Turnus' treachery and Aeneas' alliance to Latinus in the two later sources. Dionysius' version is unique in his insertion of a three-year gap between the war against Turnus and the war against Mezentius and the fact that Aeneas does not die in the same battle as Turnus. Dionysius' careful association of both Trojans and Latins with Hellenic heritage is also unique.

The character Turnus Herdonius, who appears in both Livy's and Dionysius' narratives of the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, bears a marked resemblance to the Turnus of the Aeneas legend. Ogilvie argues convincingly that Turnus Herdonius is an impossible historical figure: the Etruscan-derived name "Turnus" is unlikely for a Latin chief in the era of the Tarquins and "could hardly be a *praenomen*," nor does it fit together with the well-attested Sabine name

²⁴Linderski: 4, 9.

“Herdonius.” Ogilvie also points to the story’s function as an etiology connected with the site of the Ferentine spring, which would suggest a mythological rather than an historical source.²⁵ In short, Turnus Herdonius seems to have been based upon the Turnus of the Aeneas myth, leading Ogilvie to characterize him as “a curious mixture of the plausible and the impossible” and Nicholas Horsfall to call him “an unskilled figment.”²⁶ Significantly, Turnus Herdonius, as a sort of distillation of the Turnus of the Aeneas story, displays several dominant character traits of the earlier Turnus and we might conjecture that these are the traits most likely to have made it into a derivative character. For this reason, we are able to make general observations about the characterization of the Turnus of the Aeneas legend by looking at the broad strokes used to characterize Turnus Herdonius, who was derived from him.

Livy describes Turnus Herdonius as *seditionis facinorosusque* and as a Latin chief from Aricia who becomes enraged at the disrespect of King Tarquinius Superbus for Turnus Herdonius and his fellow Latin chiefs and attempts to lead the other chiefs in boycotting a meeting with Tarquinius.²⁷ Upon hearing of Turnus’ insolence, Tarquinius orders a large quantity of weapons to be planted in Turnus’ tent and then publicly accuses Turnus of stockpiling arms for seditious purposes. When the weapons are discovered in his tent, Tarquinius sentences the very surprised Turnus to death.²⁸ Dionysius’ story is much the same (although in his version Turnus is from Corilla rather than Aricia), but Dionysius adds that Turnus’ motive for trying to stir up the Latin leaders against Tarquinius is long-standing hatred of the king for choosing to marry his daughter to Turnus’ political rival Octavius Mamilius rather than to Turnus.

²⁵ Ogilvie, 199-200.

²⁶ Ibid., Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 7: A Commentary*, 508.

²⁷ Livy *Epon.* 1.50.3-9.

²⁸ Livy *Epon.* 1.51.1-9.

ἀνὴρ τις ἐν πόλει μὲν οἰκῶν Κορίλλῃ, δυνατὸς δὲ καὶ χρήμασι καὶ φίλοις
καὶ τὰ πολέμια ἄλκιμος πολιτικόν τε λόγον εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἄδύνατος, Τύρνος
Ἑρδώνιος ὄνομα, Μαμιλίῳ τε διάφορος ὧν διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὰ κοινὰ
φιλοτιμίαν καὶ Ταρκυνίῳ διὰ τὸν Μαμίλιον ἀπεχθόμενος, ὅτι κηδεστὴν
ἐκείνον ἡξίωσε λαβεῖν ἀνθ' ἑαυτοῦ.²⁹

There was a certain man dwelling in the city of Corilla, Turnus Herdonius by name, powerful both because of his wealth and his allies, brave in warfare and not unskilled in political speeches. He was at variance with Mamilius because of his ambition in politics and also with Tarquinius because he had seen fit to choose that same Mamilius, although he was inimical to Tarquinius, to be his son-in-law instead of Turnus.

Like the other Turnus, Herdonius is a rebellious Latin leader who champions an unsuccessful opposition to a foreign-born king, seeking to cement his position with the Latins (through marriage or otherwise). In Dionysius' version the primary motive for his rebelliousness is jealous anger over not receiving the wife to whom he thought himself entitled. Thus one might characterize the Turnus of the pre-Vergilian Aeneas myth as jealous and arrogant but also as an enemy of tyranny and a misguided champion of Italian freedom. However, Turnus fights against the foreign tyranny of Trojans/Romans over the Latin cities and so in Roman versions of the tale (the only versions we know to have existed), Turnus is not a freedom-fighter and like Brutus but a traitor and a failure.

In conclusion, Turnus is not attested as a part of the Aeneas legend before the second century when Cato names him as Aeneas' adversary. As the character developed over time, Turnus became less the noble Latin and more the treacherous foil to the piety of Aeneas, and it is not unreasonable to presume that this development coincided roughly with the increasing public use of the Aeneas myth both by the Roman state and by individual patrician families of Alban descent throughout the second century. This development could reasonably have prompted a

²⁹ *Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom.* 4.45.4.

revision of Aeneas' undiplomatic treatment of his Latin hosts as seen in Cato's version.³⁰ Yet even as Turnus became more the villain, he did not become any more three-dimensional. It was not until Vergil composed his version of the story of Aeneas' landing in Italy that Turnus became the multi-dimensional and tragic character familiar to educated readers of the last 2000 years.

³⁰ Erich S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 45-47.; Bremmer and Horsfall, 22-23.

CHAPTER 2

VERGIL'S CONTRADICTIONARY CHARACTERIZATION OF TURNUS IN THE *AENEID*

As I established in the previous chapter, Turnus is a character in the Aeneas myth before Vergil composes the *Aeneid*. Vergil, however, demonstrates his poetic genius by transforming Turnus from a two-dimensional antagonist to a tragic figure with layers of motivation. As a result, Vergil allows the enemy of his epic hero “an autonomous, personal *raison d'être* which the historico-epic norm had always denied.”³¹ In this way, Turnus emerges from the background as a major character whose emotions are revealed to the reader, whose actions are described and whose death ends the work. Even though Vergil gives Turnus a larger role in the narrative than had any of his predecessors, he describes Turnus in such a confusing and contradictory manner that Turnus becomes both enigmatic and problematic. Therefore, after a brief synopsis of the basic plot of Vergil's version of the “Aeneas in Italy” story (for comparison with the versions explored in the previous chapter) we will proceed to document two of the contradictions inherent in Turnus' characterization in the *Aeneid*, that he is both pious and wrathful and is both Italian and Argive. We will then examine incongruous literary allusions which compare Turnus to Achilles, Hector and Aeneas from the *Iliad* and similarly contradictory historical allusions relating Turnus both to Roman Republican heroes and to enemies of the state. The goal of this chapter is simply to highlight these incongruities; the next chapter will analyze and discuss them.

³¹ Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, ed., Charles Segal (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 157.

The Basic Narrative

Turnus' basic role in the *Aeneid* is similar to earlier versions, but contains marked departures. In Vergil's narrative, Turnus seems rather unconcerned about the arrival of the Trojans and the betrothal of Aeneas to Lavinia. He may intend to take some action, but his words of dismissal to the Fury Allecto, when she appears to him as a priestess and tries to stir him up against the Trojans, seem to suggest that he is in no hurry:

cura tibi divum effigies et templa tueri;
bella viri pacemque gerent quis bella gerenda³²

Your concern should be defending the images of the gods and their temples; men
(by whom wars must be waged) will manage wars and peace

Turnus eventually finds the will to fight after Allecto reveals her true form and supernaturally enrages him:

sic effata facem iuveni coniecit et atro
lumine fumantis fixit sub pectore taedas³³

Having spoken thus she threw a torch at the youth and thrust the burning pine
smoking with black flame under his breast.

Thus enraged, Turnus leads the Latins into war against the Trojans, with Queen Amata urging him on and King Latinus disapproving. The war continues through the last six books of the *Aeneid*, with both sides recruiting allies and each having its share of successes. In the end, the war is decided by a duel between Aeneas and Turnus. Just before this duel, Jupiter sends a frightful Dira to terrify and weaken Turnus. Thus weakened, Turnus is no match for Aeneas. He yields and Aeneas kills him.

Vergil adds supernatural elements, namely Allecto and the Dira, to the story of the conflict, and the war seems to end with Turnus' death; Mezentius is killed in Book 10 and thus

³² *Aen.* 7.443-444.

³³ *Aen.* 7.456-457.

does not survive to carry on the war against Ascanius after Aeneas and Turnus die. Mezentius is given a son, Lausus, who is killed by Aeneas; his death is balanced by that of Evander's son Pallas whom Turnus kills shortly before. Another great innovation both in the story and in the development of Turnus' character is that Vergil links Turnus as a sibling to the Italic deity Juturna, the significance of which I will discuss later.³⁴ Vergil has both collapsed and expanded the Turnus episode of the Aeneas myth. He removes the second phase of the war, between Ascanius and Mezentius, allowing it to be decided between the two generals who started it, while devoting half of his epic poem to describing the conflict, adding characters and episodes and in other ways generally expanding upon the myth to an unprecedented degree. Vergil stresses the importance of Turnus in his version of the Aeneas legend by focusing so much of the *Aeneid* on the struggle between Turnus and Aeneas and by rearranging the traditional order of events (according to which the war ought to continue on under the leadership of Mezentius for years after Turnus' death) in order to make Turnus the final obstacle standing between Aeneas and his divinely-promised destiny in Italy. As Vergil places great emphasis on Turnus through the structure of the narrative, it is extremely perplexing that Vergil also problematizes Turnus through contradictory descriptions.

Contradictory Characterization: Turnus as Both Pious and Savagely Wrathful

The first contradiction we will explore is that Turnus appears driven both by piety and insane rage. As early as Book 1 of the *Aeneid*, Vergil sets up *pietas* as “the antithesis of *furor*,” with the former portrayed as the rational force which promotes “civilization, peace, calm” while

³⁴ Christine Perkell, “The Lament of Juturna: Pathos and Interpretation in the *Aeneid*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 127 (1997): 273-274. Juturna seems originally to have been a goddess of springs, after whom the spring called the *lacus Iuturnae* in the Roman Forum had been named. In addition to her relationship with Turnus, her rape by Jupiter seems to have been a Vergilian innovation.

the latter represents irrational violence and disorder.³⁵ The conflict between these two forces is clear from Jupiter's speech to Venus in Book 1:

dirae ferro et compagibus artis
 claudentur belli portae; furor impius intus,
 saeva sedens super arma, et centum vinctus aenis
 post tergum nodis, fremet horridus ore cruento³⁶

The dire gates of war will be closed with iron and with joints of good craftsmanship; impious *furor* within, sitting on top of harsh weapons, and chained with a hundred brazen restraints behind its back. Bristling, it will groan with a gory mouth.

Jupiter suggests that Aeneas' future descendants, the Romans, will be able to overcome impious *furor* and in doing so will end all war, thus equating *furor* with war and *pietas* (the opposite of *furor impius*) with peace. Given this emphasis on the opposition between *furor* and *pietas*, it is surprising that the characterization of Turnus clearly includes both.

Turnus' *furor* is not hard to spot in the *Aeneid*. He is a very angry character. Vergil makes this clear with his frequent use of the word for anger (*ira*) and its derivatives in association with Turnus. Moreover, Vergil uses an even stronger word, *violentia*, four times to describe Turnus' actions and state of mind:

violentaque pectora Turni³⁷
 The violent breast of Turnus

Talibus exarsit dictis violentia Turni³⁸
 The violence of Turnus flared up because of these words

haud secus accenso gliscit violentia Turno³⁹
 Hardly otherwise did violence blaze up for enflamed Turnus

³⁵ Christine Perkell, "Aeneid 1: An Epic Programme," in *Reading Vergil's Aeneid: An Interpretive Guide*, ed. Christine Perkell (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 36.

³⁶ *Aen.* 1.293-296.

³⁷ *Aen.* 10.151.

³⁸ *Aen.* 11.376.

³⁹ *Aen.* 12.9.

haudquaquam dictis violentia Turni / flectitur⁴⁰
 The violence of Turnus is not at all swayed by these words

Vergil uses this word infrequently of other characters and never of Aeneas. Vergil also uses the words *furens* three times to describe Turnus:

Ductori Turno furenti⁴¹
 Turnus, the raging leader

cingitur ipse furens Turnus⁴²
 Turnus himself, raging, is girded

ille furens (et saeva Iouis sic numina poscunt)⁴³
 That man [Turnus], raging (the savage will of Jupiter demands even this)

The third instance, line 11.901, highlights the contrast in Turnus between savage *furor* and *pietas* since it suggests that it is Jupiter's will that Turnus act according to *furor*. Vergil also calls attention to the irrational nature of Turnus' *furor* by describing Turnus as *amens* four times in the *Aeneid*, three of them in the climactic Book 12:

arma amens fremit⁴⁴
 Insane, he clamors for weapons

amens subsistit⁴⁵
 Insane, he came to a stop

ergo amens diversa fuga petit aequora Turnus⁴⁶
 Therefore Turnus, insane, seeks different fields by flight

. . . . tum vero amens formidine Turnus⁴⁷
 Then Turnus, insane with true fear,

Of these four, only the first directly relates to Turnus' anger, occurring just after Amata has supernaturally enraged Turnus with her torch. The remaining three serve to highlight the chaotic

⁴⁰ *Aen.* 12.45-46.

⁴¹ *Aen.* 9.691.

⁴² *Aen.* 11.486.

⁴³ *Aen.* 11.901.

⁴⁴ *Aen.* 7.460.

⁴⁵ *Aen.* 12.622.

⁴⁶ *Aen.* 12.742.

⁴⁷ *Aen.* 12.776.

nature of Turnus on the battlefield, but all describe Turnus' mental state in moments of fear. The second occurs after Turnus hears the wailing of the Latins who have discovered Amata's suicide, the third occurs after Turnus' sword breaks and the fourth occurs after Aeneas's spear misses Turnus and sticks in the stump of Faunus' sacred tree. Beyond this kind of direct description, however, Vergil calls attention to the wrath of Turnus through the use of violent and savage similes to describe Turnus' actions.

All of the similes used of Turnus in the *Aeneid* characterize him as wild and uncivilized, and most portray him as insanely raging. This is most clearly illustrated in Book 12, where Vergil likens Turnus to Mars:

qualis apud gelidi cum flumina concitus Hebri
 sanguineus Mavors clipeo increpat atque furentis
 bella movens immittit equos, illi aequare aperto
 ante Notos Zephyrumque volant, gemit ultima pulsu
 Thraca pedum circumque atrae Formidinis ora
 Iraeque Insidiaeque, dei comitatus, aguntur.⁴⁸

Just as when bloody Mars thunders with his shield alongside the frozen Hebrus, stirring up the river, and sends in his horses, driving war. When level ground has been revealed, those horses fly faster than the south and west winds, furthest Thrace groans with the striking of their feet and around the countenances of black Fear, Anger and Treachery, the retinue of the god, are driven.

This simile relates Turnus to the frenzied war god at his very worst: bloody, noisy, barbaric and terrifying, embodying the violent *furor* which stands opposed to peace and civilization.

Vergil uses animal similes to characterize Turnus as wild and violent. He compares Turnus twice to a wolf, the first time when Turnus is taunting the besieged Trojans who refuse to come out to fight:

ac veluti pleno lupo insidiatus ovili
 cum fremit ad caulas ventos perpessus et imbris
 nocte super media; tuti sub matribus agni
 balatum exercent, ille asper et improbus ira

⁴⁸ *Aen.* 12.331-336.

saevit in absentis collecta fatigat edendi
 ex longo rabies et siccae sanguine fauces:
 haud aliter Rutulo muros et castra tuenti
 ignescunt irae, duris dolor ossibus ardet.⁴⁹

And just as a wolf having lain in wait at a full sheepfold howls at the fence, having endured wind and rain past the middle of the night; the lambs, safe under their mothers, keep up their bleating. That one, wild and shameless with wrath, the madness of hunger collected from a long time back, his jaws thirsty for blood rages against those out of reach: hardly otherwise did rage flare up for the Rutulian gazing at the walls and the camp, a cruel sickness burns in his bones.

Here we see Vergil comparing Turnus to a desperate and ravenous wolf whose howling outside the sheepfold accomplishes no more than to drive the lambs to the safety of their mothers. The clause *duris dolor ossibus ardet* describes the rage of Turnus almost as a disease destroying him from the inside.

About five hundred lines later, Vergil likens Turnus both to a wolf stealing a lamb from the fold and an eagle snatching up a rabbit

simul arripit ipsum
 pendentem et magna muri cum parte revellit:
 qualis ubi aut leporem aut candenti corpore cycnum
 sustulit alta petens pedibus Iouis armiger uncis,
 quaesitum aut matri multis balatibus agnum
 Martius a stabulis rapuit lupo.⁵⁰

At the same time he seizes the very man hanging and strips him off along with a large part of the wall, just as when the weapon-bearer of Jupiter bears up with its taloned feet either a hare or a swan with a brilliant white body, seeking high heaven, or when the wolf of Mars has seized from the pen with much bleating a lamb sought by its mother.

This simile also highlights the contradiction of *pietas* versus *furor* in Turnus' characterization.

Vergil suggests that Turnus is similar both to an eagle, the animal of Jupiter, and to Mars' wolf.

The former uses the neutral verb *sustulit* while the latter depicts the mother of the prey pathetically bleating and uses the violent verb *rapuit*. Thus in one simile Vergil presents two

⁴⁹ *Aen.* 9.59-66.

⁵⁰ *Aen.* 9.561-566.

possible readings of Turnus' killing of the warrior Lycus: either Turnus is acting as an agent of Jupiter, or he is a cruel instrument of Mars.

Vergil twice compares Turnus to a lion, first in Book 10 just before Turnus' duel with Pallas:

desiluit Turnus biiugis, pedes apparat ire
comminus; utque leo, specula cum vidit ab alta
stare procul campis meditantem in proelia taurum,
advolat, haud alia est Turni venientis imago.⁵¹

Turnus leapt down from his chariot, prepares himself to go on foot into hand-to-hand combat, just as a lion flies forth when he sees from a high outlook a bull in far-off fields with combat on its mind. Hardly otherwise is the appearance of Turnus approaching.

Then, at the beginning of Book 12, Vergil again compares Turnus to a lion:

Poenorum qualis in arvis
saucius ille gravi venantum vulnere pectus
tum demum movet arma leo, gaudetque comantis
excutiens cervice toros fixumque latronis
impavidus frangit telum et fremit ore cruento:
haud secus accenso gliscit violentia Turno.⁵²

Just as in the fields of the Carthaginians a lion, his chest wounded by the serious blow from the hunters then at last moves to the fight and rejoices, shaking loose the mane of hair from his neck and fearless shatters the weapon of the hunter, stuck fast, and roars with a bloody mouth. Hardly otherwise did violence blaze up in Turnus enflamed.

The latter passage shows how Vergil uses similes to emphasize Turnus' extremely wild rage; he compares Turnus to a wounded lion who knows he is mortally wounded but revels in trying to kill the hunter before he dies. This simile has one of the four uses of *violentia* to describe Turnus.

Vergil also compares Turnus to a bull, first just after Turnus takes up his god-crafted arms and exhorts his spear to help him kill the Phrygian "*semivir*," Aeneas:

⁵¹ *Aen.* 10.453-256

⁵² *Aen.* 12.4-9.

his agitur furiis, totoque ardentis ab ore
 scintillae absistunt, oculis micat acribus ignis,
 mugitus veluti cum prima in proelia taurus
 terrificos ciet aut irasci in cornua temptat
 arboris obnixus trunco, ventosque lacessit
 ictibus aut sparsa ad pugnam proludit harena.⁵³

Driven by these furies, fiery sparks leapt from his entire face, fire flashed in his fierce eyes, just like when a bull at the beginning of fights musters a terrifying bellow or incites rage into his horns having struggled against the trunk of a tree and challenges the winds with blows or practices in the sand sprinkled for the fight.

Later Vergil includes Turnus in a simile which compares both Turnus and Aeneas to frenzied bulls fighting for dominance over the herd:

ac velut ingenti Sila summove Taburno
 cum duo conversis inimica in proelia tauri
 frontibus incurrunt, pavidi cessere magistri,
 stat pecus omne metu mutum, mussantque iuvencae
 quis nemori imperitet, quem tota armenta sequantur;
 illi inter sese multa vi vulnera miscent
 cornuaque obnixa infigunt et sanguine largo
 colla armosque lavant, gemitu nemus omne remugit:
 non aliter Tros Aeneas et Daunius heros
 concurrunt clipeis, ingens fragor aethera complet.⁵⁴

And just as on massive Sila or the peak of Taburnus when two bulls run against one another into hostile battles with their foreheads turned together, their frightened masters have retreated, the herd stands mute in united fear and the heifers brood over who will rule over the wood, whom the whole herd will follow; those ones trade wounds among themselves with force and having struggled fix in their horns and bathe their necks and flanks with profuse blood, the whole grove resounds with their groaning. Not otherwise did Trojan Aeneas and the Daunian hero rush together with their shields, a great din fills the heavens.

Both similes emphasize the uncontrollable, bloody rage of Turnus which is like the frenzy of a bull that even the herdsmen fear. The latter simile is particularly interesting because it puts Aeneas on an equal level with Turnus in terms of *furor*; both are like bulls fighting for

⁵³ *Aen.* 12.103-106.

⁵⁴ *Aen.* 12.715-724.

dominance, and, at least in the eyes of the spectators, both seem to have a chance to win. We will further address this pairing of Aeneas and Turnus in the next chapter.

Finally, Vergil emphasizes Turnus' wild and uncontrolled *furor* by comparing him to violent forces of nature. In Book 12, when Turnus is cutting a path alone across the battlefield, Vergil likens him both to a raging fire destroying a forest and to a flooding river laying waste to a plain:

ac velut immissi diversis partibus ignes
 arentem in silvam et virgulta sonantia lauro,
 aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis
 dant sonitum spumosi amnes et in aequora currunt
 quisque suum populatus iter: non segnus ambo
 Aeneas Turnusque ruunt per proelia;⁵⁵

And just as fires have been let loose into a dry forest in different parts and the groves are noisy with laurel, or when foaming rivers give a roar on their rapid descent from the high mountains and rush into the sea, each one having devastated its own course. With no less activity did Aeneas and Turnus run through the battle.

In this simile, as in the previous one about bulls, Vergil compares Turnus' destructive rage to Aeneas'; both are likened to uncontrollable, unpredictable natural disasters. Less than two hundred lines later, Vergil again compares Turnus to a violent natural phenomenon, likening Turnus leaping off his chariot into the fray to a boulder falling uncontrollably down from a mountain, smashing whatever is in its way:

ac veluti montis saxum de vertice praeceps
 cum ruit avulsum vento, seu turbidus imber
 proluit aut annis solvit sublapsa vetustas;
 fertur in abruptum magno mons improbus actu
 exsultatque solo, silvas armenta virosque
 involuens secum: disiecta per agmina Turnus
 sic urbis ruit ad muros⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Aen.* 12.521-526.

⁵⁶ *Aen.* 12.684-690.

And just as when as a rock rushes headfirst down from the peak of a mountain, having been pulled away by wind or a turbulent storm washed it out or old age creeping up in years loosened it, the uncontrollable mass is carried into its descent with a mighty motion and it leaps out from the earth, rolling up forests and flocks and men with itself. Thus did Turnus rush through the broken battle lines to the walls of the city.

Both of these similes compare Turnus to destructive natural phenomena which destroy people and things at random, making no distinction in their paths of destruction. This is the very essence of chaotic *furor*.

Through these similes we can see how Vergil characterizes Turnus as a raging agent of *furor*. He is destructive, chaotic and merciless. Indeed, like a falling boulder or a forest fire he is a danger to everyone around him, friend or foe. In fact, the only time Vergil compares Turnus to something other than a savage beast or a destructive force of nature is when he compares Turnus to raging Mars. Thus both through direct description in the narrative and through similes, Vergil shows Turnus to be a living embodiment of irrational, destructive *furor*.⁵⁷

Given the antithesis Vergil suggests early in the *Aeneid* between chaotic *furor* and civilizing *pietas*, it is surprising that he portrays the same frenzied warrior just discussed as having a measure of piety. The most direct evidence for Vergil's characterization of Turnus as pious is the use of the word *pious* to describe him in Book 10. Vergil also makes Turnus' piety apparent through the attention Turnus pays to the gods, and through the aid offered to Turnus by native Italian deities in return for his dutiful devotion.

The only time Vergil actually uses the adjective *pious* to describe Turnus is in Book 10, in the context of Juno's sarcastic suggestion that Jupiter allow Turnus to be killed:

nunc pereat Teucrisque pio det sanguine poenas.
ille tamen nostra deducit origine nomen

⁵⁷ This characterization of Turnus as mad with fury does not apply to Turnus during the two short periods of the narrative when he is free from the supernaturally inspired rage of Allecto—namely, before Allecto appears to him in Book 7 and after the Dira terrifies him in Book 12.

Pilumnusque illi quartus pater, et tua larga
saepe manu multisque oneravit limina donis.⁵⁸

Now let him die and let him pay a penalty to the Teucrians with his pious blood.
Yet that man derives his family from our origin [i.e. the god Saturn], and
Pilumnus is his great-great-grandfather and he has often loaded your great
temples with many gifts from his hand.

Juno clearly thinks that Turnus possesses *pietas*, and thinks that Jupiter ought to recognize it too.
She calls his blood *pious* directly, reminds Jupiter of Turnus' Saturnian ancestry and his descent
from the god Pilumnus and finally she implores Jupiter to remember Turnus' many past
sacrifices. Jupiter does not contest Juno's characterization of Turnus as pious, but instead allows
Juno to continue protecting Turnus a while longer:

tolle fuga Turnum atque instantibus eripe fati:
hactenus indulsisse vacat.⁵⁹

Rescue Turnus in flight and snatch him from the impending fates: there is time to
indulge this much.

Thus Juno claims the adjective *pious* for Turnus and Jupiter does not dispute it; indeed, he seems
to respond by granting a boon to Turnus in exchange for his past *pietas*.

Vergil also suggests Turnus' piety indirectly through his description of Turnus' pious
reaction to divine omens. At the beginning of Book 9, for example, Iris appears to Turnus and
urges him to attack the camp of the Trojans while Aeneas is not there. Turnus accepts the divine
sign piously and immediately proceeds to pray and to make sacred vows:

agnovit iuvenis duplicisque ad sidera palmas
sustulit ac tali fugientem est voce secutus:
'Iri, decus caeli, quis te mihi nubibus actam
detulit in terras? unde haec tam clara repente
tempestas? medium video discedere caelum
palantisque polo stellas. sequor omina tanta,
quisquis in arma vocas.' et sic effatus ad undam

⁵⁸ *Aen.* 10.617-620.

⁵⁹ *Aen.* 10.624-625.

processit summoque hausit de gurgite lymphas
multa deos orans, oneravitque aethera votis.⁶⁰

The youth [Turnus] recognized her and stretched both palms to the heavens and with such a speech addressed [Iris] departing: “Iris, glory of heaven, who brought you down to me, driven from the clouds and onto the earth? Where did this clear weather suddenly come from? I see the middle of the sky split open and the stars wandering in the sky. I shall follow such great omens, whoever you are who calls me to arms.” And having thus spoken he proceeded to the river and drank clear waters from the uppermost flow and loaded down the heavens with his vows, beseeching the gods for many things.

Turnus’ first reaction to the apparition of Iris and the subsequent omens in the sky is not to attack, as she had commanded him (and as we might expect *furor* to have motivated him to do, were it his only motivation). Instead, Turnus first turns to ritual and prayer. C. J. Mackie argues from this passage that Turnus takes Iris’ apparition to mean that the gods favor his side in the war and for that reason Turnus incorrectly interprets the transformation of Aeneas’ ships into nymphs in Book 9.⁶¹

‘Troianos haec monstra petunt, his Iuppiter ipse
auxilium solitum eripuit: non tela neque ignis
expectant Rutulos. ergo maria invia Teucris,
nec spes ulla fugae: rerum pars altera adempta est,
terra autem in nostris manibus.’⁶²

These signs threaten the Trojans, with them Jupiter himself has snatched away their solitary help: Neither their weapons nor fire await the Rutulians. The seas are therefore not crossable for the Teucrians, nor is there any hope of escape. Half of their cause has been taken away; the land, however, is in our hands.

Turnus assumes that Jupiter has performed the miraculous transformation in order to destroy the Trojans’ only hope of escape, thereby displaying his favor for the Latin side. That Turnus as mistakenly believes that the gods judge the Latin side as just side explains Turnus’

⁶⁰ *Aen.* 9.16-24.

⁶¹ C. J. Mackie, “Quisquis in Arma Vocas: Turnus and Jupiter in the *Aeneid*,” *Antichthon* 24 (1990): 80.

⁶² *Aen.* 9.128-132

optimism throughout Books 7-11. It also argues against the reading of critics such as Stuart Small who argues for a reading of Turnus as essentially impious. Small says:

[Turnus] is transformed into an instrument of destruction. He causes tremendous suffering and loss as the principal human abettor of a war which Jupiter has forbidden and which he regards as basically impious. . . . The torment of [Turnus'] closing days on earth is barren. It only lays bare the fact that he is basically unworthy to participate in the new order of life in Italy.⁶³

This reading, however, incorrectly analyzes the motivation for Turnus' actions because it holds Turnus accountable for knowledge which he did not have. Turnus cannot be judged impious for acting contrary to the will of Jupiter when all the information he had been given seemed to point to Jupiter's favor. Indeed, when Juno calls Turnus *pious*, Jupiter permits her to preserve Turnus' life and to continue the "forbidden" war. Mackie's reading is preferable because it acknowledges Turnus' ignorance of the conflict between Jupiter and Juno (which results in divine signs encouraging Turnus to act contrary to Jupiter's will). From this perspective, it is clear that Vergil portrays Turnus as piously following what he believes to be the will of the gods.

The way in which native Italian gods grant Turnus favors suggests his piety. The best example comes in Book 12, when Aeneas throws a spear that misses Turnus but sticks in the stump of a tree sacred to Faunus. Turnus responds by calling out to the god, reminding him of the impiety of the Trojans who had earlier cut down the sacred tree and beseeching Faunus not to let go of the spear *colui vestros si semper honores* ("if I have always taken part in your sacrifices.") Faunus then causes Aeneas' spear to stick fast in the tree.⁶⁴

The river god Tiber shows divine favor to Turnus in Book 9 after Turnus' raid on the Trojan camp:

⁶³ Stuart G. P. Small, "The Arms of Turnus: *Aeneid* 7.789-92," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 90 (1959): 251-252.

⁶⁴ *Aen.* 12.766-783.

tum demum praeceps saltu sese omnibus armis
 in fluvium dedit. ille suo cum gurgite flavo
 accepit venientem ac mollibus extulit undis
 et laetum sociis abluta caede remisit.⁶⁵

Then at last he gave himself fully-armed into the river headlong with a leap. That river with its golden waters received him and with soft waves carried him away and sent him, cleansed of slaughter, rejoicing back to his comrades.

Turnus, tired, in full armor and under heavy fire from the Trojans, is kept safe and even ritually purified (*abluta*) by the river god and is delivered safely to his allies. The river god's gentle reception of Turnus is clear from the adjective *mollibus*. Vergil does not say explicitly that Turnus' past devotion to Tiber Tiber has favorably disposed the god towards Turnus, but that would be a reasonable conclusion given the favor granted by Faunus in the similar episode cited above.

In conclusion, Vergil characterizes Turnus as pious through one direct use of the adjective *pius*, through Turnus' responses to divine signs and through the favorable relations between Turnus and the gods Tiber and Faunus. *Furor* is certainly the dominant element in the characterization of Turnus, at least after Allecto thrusts the torch into his breast in Book 7 and before the appearance of the Dira in Book 12. However, even between these two important turning points, when Turnus is in fact possessed by *furor*, he also displays a measure of *pietas*. These characterizations set up one of the contradictions inherent in Vergil's Turnus.

Contradictory Characterization: Turnus as Both Italian and Greek

In Vergil's version of the Aeneas story, as in all previous versions, Turnus is Italian. Vergil makes Turnus' Italian ethnicity clear through his family tree. Turnus is related to the Latin royal family: Amata calls him *consanguineus* and Latinus (12.29) mention that he is

⁶⁵ *Aen.* 9.815-818.

“*cognatus sanguine*” with Turnus (7.366). Vergil makes Turnus the brother of the goddess Juturna, a native goddess of springs with strong ties to Rome, and the son of Venilia the mother of Turnus and great-great-grandson of Pilumnus, both Italian deities.⁶⁶ In short, Turnus is a native Italian of prominent lineage, being both to the royal house of Lavinium and to several Italian deities.

It seems strange, then, that Vergil also gives this hero of superb Italian pedigree a Greek heritage. In fact, Vergil makes Turnus not just Greek but a descendent of the divine founder of the royal house of Argos, the river god Inachus, as Amata’s statement makes clear:

et Turno, si prima domus repetatur origo,
Inachus Acrisiusque patres mediaeque Mycenae.⁶⁷

And as for Turnus, if the first origin of his lineage should be sought: Inachus and Acrisius are his forefathers and Mycenae is at the center.

That the “first origin” of Turnus’ family was Inachus, ancestor of such notable Greeks as Agamemnon and Menelaus, appears incongruous with his Italian heritage. At the very least, it makes him something of an oddity in the Latin royal family, since neither his aunt Amata nor any other Latin seems to have such a lineage.

Contradictory Homeric Allusions: Turnus as Achilles, Hector and the Iliadic Aeneas

Vergil’s *Aeneid* has a very complex intertextual relationship with the Homeric epics. At several points in the *Aeneid*, Vergil invites his readers to note similarities between Turnus and characters from the *Iliad* beginning with the Sibyl’s prophecy to Aeneas in Book 6 that a “new Achilles” has arisen in Latium (*alius Latio iam partus Achilles*).⁶⁸ Indeed Turnus does resemble

⁶⁶ S. Farron, “The Death of Turnus Viewed in the Perspective of Its Historical Background,” *Acta Classica* 24 (1981): 103; Brent Hannah, “Manufacturing Descent: Virgil’s Genealogical Engineering,” *Arethusa* 37 (2004): 149.

⁶⁷ *Aen.* 7.371-372.

⁶⁸ *Aen.* 6.89.

Achilles in many ways. The general picture painted of Turnus in Book 7, of a fierce young warrior angry over the loss of a woman whom he thought promised to him by a superior, is clearly parallel to Achilles.⁶⁹ In Book 9, Iris urges Turnus to take advantage of Aeneas' absence to attack the Trojan camp, just as Iris urges Achilles to defend the Greek camp from Trojans in *Iliad* 18.⁷⁰ Later Juno crafts a phantom of Aeneas to lure Turnus away from battle, just as Apollo leads Achilles away from battle by appearing to him in the likeness of Agenor.⁷¹ The arming of Turnus in Book 12 is reminiscent of the arming of Achilles in *Iliad* 19.⁷² Finally, the simile comparing Turnus to a wounded lion echoes a Homeric simile comparing Achilles to a lion attempting to kill the hunters who had wounded it.⁷³ Vergil gives his readers more than enough hints that Turnus is the Sibyl's *alius Achilles*.

On the other hand, Vergil problematizes the identification of Turnus with Achilles through scenes in which Turnus resembles not Achilles but Hector. We can see some general similarities between the characters throughout the second half of the *Aeneid*: Turnus' attack on the Trojan ships in Book 9 mirrors Hector's assault on the Greek ships in *Iliad* 8; Turnus' spirited solo attack on the Trojans in Book 10 resembles Hector's charge against the Greeks in *Iliad* 16. Near the end of Book 12, however, Turnus makes two speeches which more clearly illuminate his similarity to Hector. First, like Hector, Turnus recognizes that divine favor is no longer on his side and that he will die in the coming duel:

iam iam fata, soror, superant, absiste morari;
quo deus et quo dura vocat Fortuna sequamur.
stat conferre manum Aeneae, stat, quidquid acerbi est,

⁶⁹ Thomas van Nortwick, "Aeneas, Turnus, and Achilles," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 110 (1980): 303.

⁷⁰ *Aen.* 9.6-13; *Il.* 18.165-202.

⁷¹ *Aen.* 10.633-688; *Il.* 21.599-611.

⁷² *Aen.* 12.81-106; *Il.* 19.368-403.

⁷³ *Aen.* 12.4-9; *Il.* 20.164-175.

morte pati, neque me indecorem, germana, videbis
amplius. hunc, oro, sine me furere ante furorem.⁷⁴

Even now the fates are overwhelming, sister; stop delaying. Let us follow where the god and where harsh Fortune calls. It is settled: to fight hand to hand with Aeneas, to suffer death, whatever of a bitter thing it is, nor will you see me cowardly any more, sister. This I pray: permit me to rage beyond rage.

This speech echoes Hector's speech to himself just before closing in to fight Achilles in hand to hand combat:

ὦ πόποι ἦ μάλα δὴ με θεοὶ θάνατον δὲ κάλεσσαν·
Δηϊφობον γάρ ἔγωγ' ἐφάμην ἥρωα παρῆναι·
ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐν τείχει, ἐμὲ δ' ἐξάπτησεν Ἀθήνη.
νῦν δὲ δὴ ἐγγύθι μοι θάνατος κακός, οὐδ' ἔτ' ἄνευθεν,
οὐδ' ἄλέη· ἦ γάρ ῥα πάλαι τό γε φίλτερον ἦεν
Ζηνὶ τε καὶ Διὸς υἱὶ ἐκηβόλῳ, οἳ με πάρος γε
πρόφρονες εἰρύατο· νῦν αὖτέ με μοῖρα κιχάνει.
μὴ μὰν ἄσπουδί γε καὶ ἄκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην,
ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἔσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι.⁷⁵

Ah! Truly indeed the gods have summoned me to death; for I thought that the warrior Deiphobus was present, but he is within the wall and Athena has deceived me. Now indeed evil death is upon me; it is not yet distant, nor is there an escape. Truly then, from long ago this was more pleasing to Zeus and the far-striking son of Zeus, who in the past graciously had rescued me. Now, however, my fate overtakes me. Now truly may I not die without a fight nor without glory, but performing some great deed and something for men of the future to hear about.

Turnus and Hector each accept that his death is both immanent and preordained by the gods; their only resolution is to face death bravely in combat.

When the duel is over and Aeneas has won, Turnus once more echoes the words of Hector as he begs Aeneas to allow his men to take his body to his father for burial:

'equidem merui nec deprecor' inquit;
'utere sorte tua. miseri te si qua parentis
tangere cura potest, oro (fuit et tibi talis
Anchises genitor) Dauni miserere senectae

⁷⁴ *Aen.* 12.676-680.

⁷⁵ *Il.* 22.297-305.

et me, seu corpus spoliatum lumine mavis,
redde meis.⁷⁶

“Indeed I have earned this, nor do I pray to avert it,” he says, “Exercise your destiny. I beg you, if the concern of a father is able to touch you at all (and your father Anchises was such for you), have mercy on the old age of Daunus and return me or, if you prefer, my body despoiled of life to my own men.

This speech resembles Hector’s plea to Achilles in *Iliad* 22 that he allow the Trojans to bury his body:

λίσσομ’ ὑπὲρ ψυχῆς καὶ γούνων σῶν τε τοκῆων
μή με ἔα παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνας καταδάψαι Ἀχαιῶν,
ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν χαλκόν τε ἄλις χρυσόν τε δέδεξο
δῶρα τὰ τοι δώσουσι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
σῶμα δὲ οἴκαδ’ ἐμὸν δόμεναι πάλιν, ὅφρα πυρός με
Τρῶες καὶ Τρώων ἄλοχοι λελάχωσι θανόντα.⁷⁷

I beg you by your soul and the knees of your parents, do not allow dogs to devour me beside the ships of the Achaeans, but take bronze and an abundance of gold, the gifts my father and my queen mother will give you and give my body back to my home, so that the Trojans and the wives of the Trojans might grant me, having died, my allotment of funeral-fire.

Both Turnus and Hector plead with their opponents on behalf of their parents to allow their families the right to bury their son. Unfortunately, both pleas fall on deaf ears as Achilles spitefully rejects Hector’s plea and Aeneas refuses to respond to Turnus’ request before killing him.

Turnus, therefore, resembles both Achilles and Hector at different points in the narrative. Vergil, however, further confuses the question of which character Turnus represents in the second half of the *Aeneid* by drawing a surprising connection between Turnus and the Iliadic Aeneas. Vergil gives the first hint of the connection between these two heroes in his description of Turnus killing Aeolus in Book 12. Turnus taunts Aeolus before killing him with the following lines:

⁷⁶ *Aen.* 12.391-396.

⁷⁷ *Il.* 22.338-343.

te quoque Laurentes viderunt, Aeole, campi
 oppetere et late terram consternere tergo.
 occidis, Argivae quem non potuere phalanges
 sternere nec Priami regnorum eversor Achilles;
 hic tibi mortis erant metae, domus alta sub Ida,
 Lyrnesi domus alta, solo Laurente sepulcrum.⁷⁸

The Laurentine fields saw you die as well, Aeolus, and the earth cover your back.
 You died, whom the Argive forces were not able to kill nor Achilles, the destroyer
 of Priam's kingdom. Here was your end. A home at the foot of Ida, a home at
 Lyrnesus, but a grave in Laurentine soil.

Vergil makes two important references in this passage: that Aeolus once escaped Achilles in battle, and that Aeolus' home is Lyrnesus. These hints lead us to the *Iliad* where three times Homer mentions an episode prior to the story of the *Iliad* (perhaps referring to a lost Aeneas epic) in which Zeus rescues Aeneas from Achilles who was laying waste to Lyrnesus.⁷⁹ The parallel between Aeolus and Aeneas fleeing Achilles is cemented by the reference to Lyrnesus: outside of the *Iliad*, this passage is one of only four mentions of Lyrnesus in ancient literature.⁸⁰

After priming the reader for an association between Turnus and the Iliadic Aeneas with this very subtle reference to Lyrnesus, Vergil makes a much more direct allusion in the final duel between Turnus and Aeneas. During this duel, Turnus throws a large stone at Aeneas:

nec plura effatus saxum circumspicit ingens,
 saxum antiquum ingens, campo quod forte iacebat,
 limes agro positus litem ut discerneret arvis.
 vix illud lecti bis sex cervice subirent,
 qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus...⁸¹

Saying nothing more, he sees a huge boulder, a huge ancient boulder
 which lay by chance in the field, placed in the field as a boundary marker
 in order to settle a dispute over the land. Hardly could twelve choice men
 (with bodies such as the earth now produces) raise it up on their necks.

⁷⁸ *Aen.* 12.542-547.

⁷⁹ *Il.* 19.291-4, 20.89-96, 20.189-94.

⁸⁰ R. F. Thomas, "The Isolation of Turnus: *Aeneid* Book 12," in *Vergil's Aeneid: Augustan Epic and Political Context*, ed. Hans-Peter Stahl (London: Duckworth Ltd., 1998), 278-280. The other three references to Lyrnesus are in a scholiast's note to Eur. *Androm.* 1, in Strabo (13.584, 612) and in the phrase *Lyrnesius Acmon* at *Aeneid* 10.128.

⁸¹ *Aen.* 12.896-900.

Turnus throws the stone at Aeneas, who is now getting the better of the fight. It falls short, and the Dira thwarts all his subsequent attempts to wound Aeneas. This passage parallels *Iliad* 20.285-87, where Aeneas is losing his duel with Achilles and likewise reaches for an enormous stone to throw at his opponent:⁸²

ὁ δὲ χερμάδιον λάβε χειρὶ
 Αἰνείας, μέγα ἔργον, ὃ οὐ δύο γ' ἄνδρε φέροιεν,
 οἷοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσ'· ὃ δέ μιν ῥέα πάλλε καὶ οἷος.⁸³

But Aeneas took a boulder with his hand, a great deed, which not two men could carry, men such as mortals are now, but he himself brandished it easily, even alone.

Turnus throwing a large rock at Aeneas parallels the Iliadic Aeneas throwing a similarly unwieldy boulder at Achilles; this is a very confusing allusion to apply to Turnus, who seemed clearly to be the *alius Achilles* of the *Aeneid*, especially as the allusion appears at the end of Book 12, just before Aeneas kills the suppliant Turnus as Achilles killed the suppliant Hector.

Contradictory Historical Allusions: Roman Heroes and Enemies of the State

Some of the most interesting (and least examined) allusions in the *Aeneid* involve historical figures. Surprisingly, these include allusions which relate Turnus to some of the Roman Republic's greatest heroes: Horatius Cocles and the father and son Decii. The allusion to Horatius Cocles occurs when Turnus plunges into the Tiber fully armed and is protected, ritually purified, and transported to his men by the river god. Horatius Cocles, whose story is told in Livy (2.10), was famous for his role in the war against the Etruscan king Lars Porsenna. As Porsenna's men attempt to cross the Sublician Bridge over the Tiber to assault Rome, Horatius' men holding the bridge desert in fear. Horatius yells at his frightened men to destroy the bridge

⁸² Michael C. J. Putnam, "Turnus, Homer, and Heroism," *Literary Imagination* 1, no. 1 (1999): 61-63.

⁸³ *Il.* 20.285-287.

behind him while he holds off the advancing army. He manages to keep Porsenna's men at bay long enough for his men to demolish the bridge, then he leaps into the river with a prayer:

Tum Cocles "Tiberine pater" inquit, "te sancte precor, haec arma et hunc militem propitio flumine accipias." Ita sic armatus in Tiberim desiluit multisque superincidentibus telis incolumis ad suos tranauit.⁸⁴

Then Cocles said, "Tiberinus, holy father, I pray that you receive these arms and this soldier into your propitious flow." Thus he leaped fully armed into the Tiber, and though many missiles were falling over him he swam safely across to his own men.

This episode is very similar to the scene in Book 9 when Turnus stand alone and remains unscathed despite the blows raining down upon his armor until finally, exhausted, he leaps "*omnibus armis*" into the Tiber, at which point

ille suo cum gurgite flavo
acceptit venientem ac mollibus extulit undis
et laetum sociis abluta caede remisit.⁸⁵

That river with its golden waters received him and with soft waves carried him away and sent him, cleansed of slaughter, rejoicing back to his comrades

Julia Dyson points out that in both cases, the Tiber itself is clearly favorable to the hero and offers his divine assistance, thereby keeping the hero safe from the hail of missiles and delivering him back to his allies.⁸⁶ As a result, Turnus, "throughout this book cast in the role of a would-be sacker of Rome, at the end surprisingly takes on the role of one of the most famous saviors of the city."⁸⁷

Vergil also invites the reader to draw a connection between Turnus and another pair of celebrated Roman heroes, Decius Mus and his son, also called Decius Mus. The elder Decius, whose story is told in Livy (8.9), was consul during a war against the Latins in 340 B.C. In the

⁸⁴ Livy *Epon.* 2.10.11.

⁸⁵ *Aen.* 9.816-818.

⁸⁶ Julia T. Dyson, *King of the Wood: The Sacrificial Victor in Virgil's Aeneid*, Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture v. 27 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 114-115.

⁸⁷ Philip R. Hardie, ed., *Aeneid Book 9* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ad 9.815-818.

Battle of Veseris in Campania, with the Romans losing ground, Decius called over the Pontifex Maximus and asked for the formula by which Decius might devote his life and the lives of the enemy army to the gods of the underworld by the archaic rite of *devotio*, essentially trading his life for a Roman victory. His son did the same when he was consul in 295 B.C. in the Battle of Sentinum against the allied Gauls and Samnites. Accius celebrates this latter *devotio* in his *Decius, sive Aeneidae*.⁸⁸ In this tradition, the words of Turnus at the council of the Latins take on special significance:

vobis animam hanc soceroque Latino
Turnus ego, haud ulli veterum virtute secundus,
devovi.⁸⁹

I, Turnus, inferior in virtue to hardly any of our ancestors, devote my soul to all of you and to my father-in-law Latinus.

R. F. Thomas says about these lines, “It is difficult not to see . . . a reference to the Decii,” which fits Turnus into the “paradigm of selfless republican patriotism.”⁹⁰ Thus Turnus in Book 11 foretells his own death, but suggests a reading of his death in terms of republican military heroism.

On the other hand, Vergil also draws an allusion between Turnus and one of Rome’s great enemies, Hannibal.⁹¹ One small allusion comes when Turnus says *audentes fortuna iuvat* (10.284). Macrobius sees in this line a direct echo of Hannibal’s words in Book 7 of Ennius’ *Annales*, *Fortibus est fortuna viris data*;⁹² Ennius’ construction is itself an alliterative variation on the proverb *fortes fortuna adiuvat*.⁹³ A somewhat more involved allusion takes place in Book 9, where Horsfall argues that “the opening of *Aeneid* 9 [i.e. Turnus’ attack on the Trojan camp] is

⁸⁸ Accius frag. 14 Warmington.

⁸⁹ *Aen.* 11.440-442.

⁹⁰ Thomas, 284-285.

⁹¹ Any allusion between Turnus and Hannibal is, of course, especially poignant because it provides a link between the antagonist of the second half of the *Aeneid* and Dido, Aeneas’ main obstacle in the first half.

⁹² Macrobi. *Sat.* 6.1.62.

⁹³ Mario Erasmo, *Archaic Latin Verse* (Newbury, MA: Focus Publishing, 2004), 95.

consciously reminiscent of a particular attack on a particular city—Hannibal’s assault on Rome in 221.”⁹⁴ Horsfall argues for the link between the Trojan camp and the city of Rome: the camp contains houses and a palace,⁹⁵ is called an *urbs* and its inhabitants called *cives*.⁹⁶ Both assaults are sudden and terrifying, with the defending force remaining ignorant of the enemy army’s approach until it is quite close. In response to the approaching enemy, both Romans and Trojans man their defenses, both lacking enough men to defend their fortifications effectively and both resorting to throwing stones and other make-shift weapons down upon the attackers. Horsfall admits that “such parallels are neither distinctive nor significant,” but they do prepare us for the parallel actions of the two generals. In Livy’s account of Hannibal’s approach, Hannibal rides forth from his main army with two thousand cavalry and, coming up as close as possible to the fortifications, *moenia situmque urbis obequitans contemplabatur*.⁹⁷ Turnus sets out similarly, *viginti lectis equitum comitatus*,⁹⁸ and when he reaches the walls of the Trojan camp he likewise reconnoiters:

huc turbidus atque huc
lustrat equo muros aditumque per avia quaerit.⁹⁹

Vehemently he scouts the wall here and there with his horse; he seeks a hidden entrance.

When Hannibal nears the Porta Capena, some traditions have him bang on the gate with his spear. This is attested by Valerius Maximus (*tum maxime Capenam portam armis Hannibale pulsante*)¹⁰⁰ as well as Silius Italicus (*clausas nunc cuspidē pulsāt / infesta*

⁹⁴ Nicholas. M. Horsfall, “Turnus *Ad Portas*,” *Latomus* 38 (1974): 80. Horsfall compares the text of the *Aeneid* with Livy’s account of Hannibal’s attack on Rome and suggests that both writers shared a common source, most likely the annalist Coelius Antipater.

⁹⁵ *Aen.* 9.502; 11.36ff.

⁹⁶ *Urbs* is used at *Aen.* 8.48, 8.473, 8.639 and 8.729, *cives* at 9.36 and 9.783.

⁹⁷ Livy *Epon.* 26.9.6.

⁹⁸ *Aen.* 9.48.

⁹⁹ *Aen.* 9.57-58.

¹⁰⁰ Val. Max. 3.7.10.

portas.)¹⁰¹ Other sources speak of Hannibal actually throwing his spear over the gate, such as Cicero's offhand comment, *Hannibal ad portas venisset murumque iaculo traiecisset*.¹⁰² This action, which Horsfall notes is reminiscent of the fetial procedure for declaring war,¹⁰³ also finds its way into Turnus' attack on the camp. As Turnus is riding up to the walls, he too throws a javelin:

iaculum attorquens emittit in auras,
principium pugnae¹⁰⁴

Winding up he casts a javelin into the air, the first of the conflict

Horsfall argues that this is the most convincing link between the two episodes, saying that "there seem to be few close analogues to obscure the parallelism for an ancient reader."¹⁰⁵ Battle follows shortly after in both cases and in both cases the defenders' victory is attributed to divine intervention: for the Trojans, Turnus turns from assaulting the walls to an attempt to burn the Trojan ships, which are saved and transformed by Cybele, for the Romans, two violent storms arise in succession, an omen which frightens Hannibal and his men, who as a result do not press the attack.¹⁰⁶ Thus Vergil paradoxically compares Turnus both to Roman heroes, Horatius Cocles and the Decii, and to one of the Republic's greatest enemies, Hannibal.

In his version of the Aeneas legend, Vergil increases the importance of Turnus by devoting half of the *Aeneid* to the conflict between Aeneas and Turnus, and by altering the traditional version of the story so that Aeneas and Turnus decide the war between Trojans and Latins rather than Ascanius and Mezentius. Vergil also transforms Turnus from a fairly straightforward antagonist into a complicated character full of contradictions. The Turnus of the

¹⁰¹ Sil. *Pun.* 12.565-566.

¹⁰² Cic. *Fin.* 4.22.

¹⁰³ Horsfall, "Turnus *Ad Portas*," 84.

¹⁰⁴ *Aen.* 9.52-53.

¹⁰⁵ Horsfall, "Turnus *Ad Portas*," 84-85.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 85-86.

Aeneid possesses both *furor* and *pietas* and is both Latin and Greek. Vergil compares him to Achilles, Hector and the Iliadic Aeneas through literary allusions and uses historical allusions to liken him variously to Roman heroes and to Hannibal. Vergil is masterful in describing Turnus in ways that appear on the surface to be irreconcilably contradictory, forcing his readers to examine Turnus more carefully in order to sort through the confusion. In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at each of the contradictions identified above and glean their significance.

CHAPTER 3

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TURNUS' CONTRADICTORY CHARACTERIZATION

Chapter 2 explored how Vergil increased the importance of Turnus in the Aeneas legend by devoting half of the epic to the war between Aeneas and Turnus and by changing the chronology of events from previous versions so that the battle between Aeneas and Turnus decides the final outcome of the war between the Trojans and Italians. Yet even as Vergil makes Turnus more important to the story, he also transforms him into a much more enigmatic figure. He accomplishes this in part by characterizing Turnus in contradictory ways, four of which we identified and explored in the previous chapter. This chapter will look more closely at each of those four contradictory characterizations and analyze their significance for the epic.

Contradictory Characterization: Turnus as Both Pious and Savagely Wrathful

In the previous chapter, we showed how both *pietas* and *furor* motivate Turnus at different points in the narrative. Vergil carefully sets up these forces in opposition to one another in Book 1: *pietas* is a civilizing, order-imposing force which Aeneas embodies, at least in the first few books of the *Aeneid*; *furor*, on the other hand, is a chaotic and destructive force associated with Juno in her opposition to the new rational order which Jupiter and Aeneas are trying to establish through the founding of the Roman people. Therefore it is surprising that Vergil shows Turnus, used by Juno as a pawn and opposed to the Trojans gaining a foothold on the Italian peninsula, not only as filled with wild *furor*, but also as possessing some measure of

pietas. Vergil suggests Turnus' through Juno's use of the adjective *pious* to describe him as well as through Turnus' swift and prayerful reaction to divine omens and by the reciprocal relationship between Turnus and the gods Tiber and Faunus. Thus Turnus seems paradoxically to possess both civilizing *pietas* and barbaric *furor*.

One explanation for this contradiction is that through this strange pairing of *pietas* and *furor* in Turnus, Vergil prepares us for the co-existence of these two forces in Aeneas at the end of the *Aeneid*, particularly in the final duel between Turnus and Aeneas. The fact that the strange union of *pietas* and *furor* which Turnus possesses throughout the second half of the *Aeneid* suddenly appears in Aeneas in the final scene of the epic influences our reading of the final scene and the epic as a whole by suggesting that Aeneas becomes increasingly similar to his opponent as the poem draws to a close.

Vergil clearly characterizes Aeneas as a character motivated primarily by *pietas*. Indeed, the phrase *pious Aeneas* appears no less than fifteen times in the *Aeneid*, beginning in Book 1 and continuing through Book 12. Aeneas' *furor* manifests itself much later. The words signifying anger and rage which Vergil uses to characterize Turnus and his actions, such as *ira*, *furens*, and *violentia*, are almost never used of Aeneas. *Violentia* is never used to describe Aeneas' actions and *furens* only twice. The first instance is at 10.604, describing Aeneas raging in bloodlust across the battlefield after having just killed a suppliant opponent, Liger, and the second is at 10.802 when the intervention of Lausus and his men prevents Aeneas from finishing off the wounded Mezentius. The word *ira* is a particularly important word for anger in the epic, as it is used to characterize the chaotic wrath of Juno at 1.11, *tantaene animis caelestibus irae?* Vergil does not use *ira* to describe Aeneas until Book 12, where it appears four times:

Aeneas acuit Martem et se suscitāt ira¹⁰⁷
 Aeneas stirred up Mars and roused himself with anger

tum vero adsurgunt irae¹⁰⁸
 then truly rage surged forth

Aeneas Turnusque ruunt per proelia; nunc, nunc / fluctuat ira intus¹⁰⁹
 Aeneas and Turnus rush through the battle; now, now anger fluctuates within

furiis accensus et ira / terribilis¹¹⁰
 Enflamed by Furies and terrifying with rage

The final line is of particular interest both because it is arguably the most extreme fit of rage described in the epic--with four words devoted to Aeneas' superlative wrath and one more, *fervidus*, used to describe him a few lines down at 951--but also because the phrase's location contrasts with the final description of Turnus a few lines earlier:

ille humilis supplexque oculos dextramque precantem / protendens¹¹¹

That man, humble and suppliant, stretching forth his eyes and his entreating right hand

Thus the last description of Turnus, until this point full of *furor*, is one of humility, by contrast to the boiling and terrible anger of Aeneas which culminates in the slaying, *furiis accensus*, of the suppliant Turnus. The specific phrase *furiis accensus* occurs twice elsewhere in the epic, first in reference to Dido's madness:

excepi et regni demens in parte locavi.
 amissam classem, socios a morte reduxi
 (heu *furiis incensa* feror!)¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *Aen.* 12.108.

¹⁰⁸ *Aen.* 12.494.

¹⁰⁹ *Aen.* 12.526-527.

¹¹⁰ *Aen.* 12.946-947.

¹¹¹ *Aen.* 12.930-931.

¹¹² *Aen.* 4.374-376.

I received him and I (out of my mind!) settled him in part of my kingdom. I located his lost fleet, led back his allies from death (alas! I am carried away, inflamed by Furies!)

and again in describing the Laurentine women entering a Bacchic frenzy in Book 7:

fama volat, *furiisque accensas* pectore matres
idem omnis simul ardor agit nova quaerere tecta¹¹³

Rumor flies and the same flame drives all the matrons simultaneously to seek new homes, inflamed in their hearts by Furies,

Some critics have characterized the *ira* of Aeneas as fundamentally different from that of Turnus. These scholars read Turnus' wrath as negative, but claim that projecting a general disdain for *ira* onto the Romans is anachronistic.¹¹⁴ The fact that the phrase *furiis accensus* is used to describe Aeneas in the closing lines of the poem seems to argue against reading Aeneas' *ira* as the morally righteous, philosophically-grounded *ira* of the Athenian and Roman law courts.¹¹⁵ Instead, the use of the phrase *furiis accensus* ties Aeneas' *ira* to the feminine, irrational *furor* of crazed Dido and of Bacchantes. Thus Aeneas, like Turnus possesses both *furor* and *pietas*.

Even though Aeneas appears as *furens* in Book 10, Vergil does not use *ira* until Book 12, and the explosion of Aeneas' rage in the duel occurs only after the truce between Juno and Jupiter. In this scene, Juno assents to Jupiter's terms, which include:

verum age et inceptum frustra summitte furorem¹¹⁶

But come and relax your fury begun in vain

Juno agrees to give up the *furor* which has been with her since Book 1. After this point, words for wrath and anger are no longer used of Turnus, so that it appears that Juno's renunciation of

¹¹³ *Aen.* 7.392-393.

¹¹⁴ G. Karl Galinsky, "The Anger of Aeneas," *The American Journal of Philology* 109, no. 3 (1988): 321-322.

¹¹⁵ For the former interpretation of *ira* in the *Aeneid*, see *ibid.*: 328.

¹¹⁶ *Aen.* 12.832.

her *furor* applies also to her mortal agent. Vergil then calls attention to the contradictory mix of *furor* and *pietas* in Aeneas with Aeneas' extreme fit of rage.

Yet the characterizations of Turnus and Aeneas are not the only places where Vergil calls the antithesis of *pietas* and *furor* into question. Throughout the poem, Vergil suggests that *furor* and *pietas* are not simple opposites like good and evil or order and chaos. *Furor* is a motivating, animating force in the *Aeneid*; Turnus is content with inaction in Book 7 until Allecto inspires him with *furor*; Aeneas hesitates at the end of Book 12, uncertain whether he should kill Turnus or grant him mercy, until *furor* overtakes him and forces him to act. Moreover, despite Jupiter's prophecy to Venus in Book 1 that the Roman race will close the gates of war, chaining up *furor impius* with a hundred bonds, Vergil describes in Book 7 the specific ritual by which the consul opens the gates:

has, ubi certa sedet patribus sententia pugnae,
ipse Quirinali trabea cinctuque Gabino
insignis reserat stridentia limina consul¹¹⁷

The consul himself, marked out by his Quirinal robe and Gabine belt, opens these [gates], this shrieking threshold, when the certain judgment of war is decided by the senate

Indeed, the future history of the Roman people detailed on Aeneas' shield in Book 8 shows that time and again:

Aeneadae in ferrum pro libertate ruebant¹¹⁸

The children of Aeneas were rushing to arms on behalf of liberty

This seems to indicate that the *furor* contained behind the gates of war must sometimes be released to serve Rome and thus is a tool which can be used to achieve *pious* or *impious* ends, an idea which contradicts Jupiter's generalization of *furor* as impious in Book 1. The question at

¹¹⁷ *Aen.* 7.611-613.

¹¹⁸ *Aen.* 8.648.

the end of the poem, therefore, is whether *furor* is objectively impious. If so, then Aeneas commits an impious act when he gives in to *furor* and kills Turnus. If on the other hand *furor* is a morally neutral tool, Aeneas killing Turnus may represent that with Jupiter's divine approval Aeneas is able to bring order to *furor* and to employ it on behalf of civilization.

Contradictory Characterization: Turnus as Both Italian and Greek

The previous chapter established that Vergil portrays Turnus as belonging genealogically both to the royal line of Argos and the Latin royal family. The link between Turnus and the Argive royal family appears to be purely Vergil's innovation, as none of Vergil's extant predecessors or contemporaries makes any reference to it. While it is not unimaginable that an epic character could be both a Latin and an Argive prince, it is certainly unusual that Turnus has such a dual lineage.

Turnus' Latin ancestry is attested in all versions of the Aeneas story which we examined in the first chapter. Since Turnus' Greek heritage is Vergil's own creation, the Argive side of Turnus' family tree holds special significance for the *Aeneid*. This Argive ancestry serves two purposes in the *Aeneid* narrative. First, it gives Turnus a real claim to the hand of Lavinia and makes him a legitimate rival to Aeneas. The oracle of Faunus (7.96-101) had commanded Latinus to marry his daughter to a foreign husband; and by giving Turnus Greek ancestors, Vergil makes Turnus a valid alternative to Aeneas. Latinus then must choose how to interpret the prophecy of Faunus (that is, are Greek ancestors enough to make one a "foreign husband"?) and Turnus' war to contest the engagement of Aeneas and Lavinia is based on a real claim. In

fact, since Aeneas traces his own lineage back to the Italian Dardanus, Turnus may have even more of a right to marry Lavinia than does Aeneas.¹¹⁹

The second role that Turnus' Argive heritage plays is to link Turnus to the many enemies of the Trojan/Roman race who likewise claimed descent from Inachus.¹²⁰ In addition to Agamemnon and Menelaus, both direct descendants of the Inachid royal house of Argos, Dido too is related to Inachus through Phoenix, the eponymous founder of the Phoenician race. Vergil calls attention to this Inachid ancestor of Dido when he has Venus refer to Carthage as *urbem Agenoris*.¹²¹ Dido's Inachid heritage suggests that her Carthaginian descendants fighting the Punic Wars against Rome were just another Inachid-led army causing trouble for the sons of Aeneas. In addition, since Alexander the Great had claimed royal Argive ancestry,¹²² the Hellenistic kings who fought against Rome were in a sense members of an Inachid dynasty. Even Antony in Vergil's day claimed descent from the Inachid Hercules,¹²³ so all these enemies of Rome traced their ancestry in one way or another to the Inachid family.¹²⁴ Reminding Romans of the Inachid ancestry claimed by several of their enemies certainly fits with the increased importance of Turnus' in Vergil's narrative. By virtue of his Greek ancestry, Turnus is not just an isolated foe but a distant cousin of Dido and a precursor of enemies to come.

Turnus' dual ethnicities also connect him to the conflicting Greek and Italian heritage proclaimed by Marc Antony, a proclaimed Inachid as we noted above. On the civil war between Octavian and Antony, David Quint notes:

¹¹⁹ *Aen.* 7.206-207; 7.240; Yasmin Syed, *Vergil's Aeneid and the Roman Self: Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 209.

¹²⁰ See Fig. 1.

¹²¹ *Aen.* 1.338.

¹²² Theocr. *Id.* 17.26-27.

¹²³ Plut. *Ant.* 4.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 150. On Dido specifically, see C. J. Mackie, "A Note on Dido's Ancestry in the *Aeneid*," *The Classical Journal* 88, no. 3 (1993).

While the wars against the assassins of Caesar and the surviving Pompeians may be justified by *pietas*, the struggle [of Octavian] with Antony pitted two Caesarian factions against one another, each of whom could claim true heirship, so . . . this Roman civil war is transformed into a foreign war.¹²⁵

Vergil himself highlights the paradox of transforming the civil war against Antony into a foreign war in his description of the battle of Actium at the end of Book 8, which “polarizes the two opponents in the battle into representations of West and East. . . . without regard for the historical distortions inherent in such an enterprise.”¹²⁶ Adding a Greek identity to the Latin ancestry Turnus already had in the Aeneas story before Vergil is a similar polarization.

Finally, dual ancestry is another way in which Turnus resembles Aeneas. When the Trojan ambassadors first meet King Latinus, they mention his descent from Dardanus, who was from Italy, therefore implying Latin ancestry for Aeneas.¹²⁷ Later, when Aeneas greets King Evander in Book 8 he traces the lineages of both the Trojans and Arcadians to show how both proclaim descent from Maia, mother of Mercury and Atlas, which seems to imply that Aeneas’ Trojan heritage is related to the Arcadians’ Greek ancestry.¹²⁸ Vergil reminds the reader of the conflicting ancestries of Aeneas at the end of Book 12 when Jupiter refers to Aeneas as “*indiges*,” a native-born Italian, just before Aeneas’ duel with Turnus.¹²⁹ This confusion of Trojan, Greek and Latin ancestry resembles the competing Latin and Greek ancestry of Turnus.

Just as the conflict between *furor* and *pietas* in Turnus and Aeneas reflects the conflict of those ideas in the epic as a whole, the contradictory ethnicities of Turnus and Aeneas likewise reflects the general fluidity of ethnicity in the *Aeneid*. The parade of the Latin army at the end of Book 7 is an example of this fluidity, since the list of prominent generals contains several non-

¹²⁵ David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 77.

¹²⁶ Syed, 178-179.

¹²⁷ *Aen.* 7.206-207; 7.240.

¹²⁸ *Aen.* 8.134-141.

¹²⁹ *Aen.* 12.794.

Latins. The first man on the list, in fact, is Mezentius the Etruscan king. Later we see Aventinus who is *satus Hercule*, Coras, described as an *Argiua iuventus*, and *Agamemnonius Halaesus*.¹³⁰ The Trojans, on the other hand, when their army is described as a whole at the funeral of Pallas in Book 11 are described as a *phalanx* comprised of *Teucrici*, *Tyrrheni*, and *Arcades*. Thus to say that the war in the second half of the poem is fought between the Latins and the Trojans is an oversimplification, since in reality the war is fought between two alliances comprised of several armies of different ethnicities. The description of the Battle of Actium on Aeneas' shield in Book 8, where Vergil exaggerates the nations under Antony's control so that his army contains Bactrians, Indians and Arabs, exemplifies this point.¹³¹ On the one hand, this multiplicity of nationalities shows how a war is never simply fought between two homogenous groups; rather, each side convinces or coerces as many outside allies as possible to fight beside them. On the other, both the war between Antony and Octavian and between Turnus and Aeneas are civil wars fought for dominance over the Latins. The fluidity of ethnicity in the *Aeneid* reveals this paradox.

Contradictory Homeric Allusions: Turnus as Achilles, Hector and the Iliadic Aeneas

The previous chapter illustrated how Vergil uses literary allusions to relate Turnus to the greatest warrior of the Greeks, Achilles, and to his counterpart on the Trojan side, Hector, as well as to the Iliadic Aeneas. Here again, the contradiction we identified in Turnus exists in Aeneas as well. First, Vergil's Aeneas is a character in the *Iliad* and maintains that identity in the *Aeneid*. He recalls his role in the Trojan War by recognizing himself on the depiction of the

¹³⁰ *Aen.* 7.656; 7.672; 7.723-724.

¹³¹ *Aen.* 8.688-705.

Trojan War on the doors of Juno's temple in Carthage.¹³² Vergil also suggests that Aeneas is the new Hector when the ghost of Hector exhorts Aeneas to lead the Trojan people away from the burning city, in a way commissioning Aeneas as his successor.¹³³ Aeneas' role as the principal rival of Turnus, who seems to be the "new Achilles" prophesied by the Sibyl, also points to Aeneas as a new Hector. In the conflict against Turnus, Aeneas and his men have to fight a defensive war from within the walls of a city called Troia, a further indication that the Trojans' war in Italy is a continuation or a reduplication of the Trojan War, with Turnus playing the role of the wrathful Achilles on the offensive and Aeneas opposing him as a kind of Hector defending the new Troy.

Vergil confuses a simple identification of Aeneas with either Hector or the Iliadic Aeneas by portraying him as an Achilles figure as well. As Thomas van Nortwick points out, "the anger of Aeneas at the death of Pallas, leading to a final confrontation with Turnus, is clearly based on the rage of Achilles over Patroclus' death and his subsequent duel with Hector."¹³⁴ Moreover, Aeneas' withdrawal from the battle in Books 8 and 9 corresponds to Achilles' withdrawal from battle for the first eighteen books of the *Iliad*. Van Nortwick points to an allusion to support this correlation: at 10.270, when Aeneas returns to battle, a flame shoots from his helmet, just as a flame burns on the helmet of Achilles when he returns to battle (*Il.* 18.205-206).¹³⁵ Van Nortwick also points to Aeneas' selection of eight Latin youths to sacrifice on Pallas' pyre in Book 10 as parallel to Achilles sacrifice of twelve Trojan victims in *Iliad* 21.¹³⁶ Finally, Aeneas' extreme wrath in the final lines of the poem, as he ignores Turnus' plea to return his body to his

¹³² *Aen.* 1.488.

¹³³ *Aen.* 2.289-295.

¹³⁴ Thomas van Nortwick, "Aeneas, Turnus, and Achilles," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 110 (1980): 308

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 309; *Aen.* 10.517-520, *Il.* 21.26-33.

father and kills Turnus in a rage, suggests a comparison with Achilles' refusal to treat Hector's body respectfully after their duel and with his wrathful slaying of Hector. Thus we see that Vergil compares Aeneas to the same contradictory characters from the *Iliad* as he does Turnus.

Vergil does not emphasize the identification of Aeneas with the Iliadic Aeneas beyond the obvious fact that Aeneas took part in the events in the Trojan War described in Homer's *Iliad*. Such an identification is obvious. Vergil's allusion to Aeneas as a kind of new Hector is likewise understated, but is also unsurprising since Aeneas is the greatest warrior of the Trojan people and leads them into war against an army led by an Inachid general. The identification of Aeneas as Achilles, on the other hand, is Vergil's own innovation and is much more explicit; Vergil supports it with many literary allusions. Vergil's identification of both Aeneas and Turnus as Achilles figures has much the same effect as his focus on *furor* as a motivating force in both Aeneas and Turnus. Indeed, the *furor* of both men is related to the thematic μῆνις of Achilles in the *Iliad*, motivating Turnus to seek recompense (in his view) a woman stolen from him and motivating Aeneas to take bitter revenge for a young companion slain by the enemy champion. Yet when Turnus resembles Hector in the closing lines of the *Aeneid*, while Aeneas resembles Achilles, we are left with a question: is Aeneas, when he becomes like the man who was his enemy on the fields of Troy, any better than violent, authority-defying Achilles, or is Aeneas a new kind of Achilles, who possesses the same excellence in battle but who is able to direct his rage on behalf of order and civilization.

Contradictory Historical Allusions: Roman Heroes and Enemies of the State

The previous chapter explored allusions which connect Turnus both to famous Roman heroes, Horatius Cocles and Decius Mus, and to the infamous enemy of the Roman state,

Hannibal. The first of these allusions comes at the beginning of Book 9, where Turnus' actions outside the walls of the Trojans' camp resemble Livy's account of Hannibal outside the gates of Rome. It is not too surprising that Vergil should choose to connect the main antagonist against the future Romans to Hannibal, one of the most famous generals ever to have threatened Rome. Yet only a few hundred lines further in Book 9, at the end of Turnus' raid, Vergil connects Turnus intertextually to the great Roman hero Horatius Cocles, whose exploits in holding off an army by himself and leaping to safety in the Tiber exemplified Roman valor. Thus in the course of a single book Turnus goes from being likened to Hannibal, a barbarian who had threatened the very existence of the Roman state, to being compared to Horatius Cocles, a stoic Republican champion who defended Rome from the Etruscans. Moreover, Turnus' role as *Staatsfeind* (to use Gaskin's term)¹³⁷ is not solidified even by the end of Book 11, when Turnus engages in an act of *devotio* in an allusion to another great hero of the Republic, Decius Mus, who willingly sacrificed himself so that the Romans could be victorious in battle.

The allusion to Hannibal fits Turnus' role as antagonist to the Trojans, the future Romans. The allusions which tie him to Roman heroes are more surprising. When Vergil compares Turnus' offensive raid on the Trojan city to Horatius Cocles' battle to defend Rome, he could be reminding the reader that Turnus is fighting a defensive war against barbarians wishing to settle in his homeland. On the other hand, perhaps the allusion simply illustrates how the Tiber favors both men because of their devotion to him, which further emphasizes Turnus' *pietas*.

In addition, just as in all three contradictions previously discussed, Vergil also highlights the contradiction of historical allusions in the final scene of the *Aeneid*. In that scene, Aeneas

¹³⁷ Richard Gaskin, "Turnus, Mezentius and the Complexity of Virgil's *Aeneid*," in *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History*, ed. Carl Deroux (Brussels: Latomus, 1979), 295.

decides against clemency for Turnus after noticing that Turnus is wearing Pallas' belt, which he had taken previously as a war prize after killed Pallas on the battlefield.

[The belt] contains on it, according to the narrator's brief ecphrasis, the "foul" murder on their wedding night of the helpless sons of Aegyptus by the daughters of Danaus. The crimes of eros become war's ugly massacre. But the analogy suggests a particular, apposite slant. The Danaids killed their cousins and therefore in the context of the *Aeneid* their deed stands as emblematic for the impious murder of civil war.¹³⁸

The story of the Danaids in Vergil's day was not simply emblematic for civil war in general, but specifically of the civil war between Octavian and Antony, for Octavian had ordered the story of the Danaids sculpted into the porticus of the Temple of Actian Apollo, the temple which "was clearly the monument to Augustus' greatest achievement, his victory at Actium."¹³⁹ Sarah Spence, applying a reading of the temple sculpture as representative of the victory at Actium, suggests that "Aeneas' killing of Turnus is like the Danaids killing of the sons of Egypt and like Octavian's victory over Antony."¹⁴⁰ But we have already seen the similarity in characterization between Turnus and Aeneas in their final duel. Aeneas is, from Turnus' perspective, the usurper from the East therefore is comparable to Antony with his Egyptian navy. Vergil does not tell us which of the dueling heroes represents Octavian and which Antony in the Danaid allusion, unsurprising since the Danaid story is one of war between brothers who for that reason are not dissimilar to begin with. Thus through that allusion the confusion in historical allusions remains present even in the final scene of the *Aeneid*.

So far, this chapter has explored the four contradictions in the characterization of Turnus in search for their significance and for their implications for the narrative of the *Aeneid*. We have found that three of the contradictions, those of *pietas* versus *furor*, the confusion of Turnus'

¹³⁸ Michael C. J. Putnam, "Aeneid 12: Unity in Closure," in *Reading Vergil's Aeneid: An Interpretive Guide*, ed. Christine Perkell (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 226-227.

¹³⁹ Sarah Spence, "Cinching the Text: The Danaids and the End of the *Aeneid*," *Vergilius* 37 (1991): 14.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

ethnicities and the conflicting Homeric allusions, have direct parallels in the characterization of Aeneas. The fourth at the very least amplifies the contrast between the *pietas* and *furor* of Turnus and so magnifies that contradiction. The fact that Aeneas exhibits contradictions so very similar to those of Turnus seems to suggest that Aeneas and Turnus are mirror images of one another. We now turn to this pairing of Aeneas and Turnus.

Turnus as the Mirror Image of Aeneas

Throughout the epic, Turnus appears as a kind of double for Aeneas. Vergil suggests that Turnus is like Aeneas through his description of Turnus as embodying several aspects of *pietas* through giving Turnus Greek ancestry to match Aeneas' claim of descent from Atlas, and finally through the allusion connecting Turnus to the Iliadic Aeneas in the act of throwing a large stone (12.896-900). Aeneas appears similar to Turnus in his *furor* throughout Book 12, through his claim of descent from the Italian Dardanus (thus giving him Italian ancestry), and through Vergil's use of Homeric allusions to compare Aeneas to Achilles. The connections between the characters run even deeper, however.

Vergil connects Aeneas and Turnus in the *Aeneid* through direct textual parallels. When Aeneas first appears in Book 1, the reader finds him frightened by the tempest sent against his fleet by Juno. The first line used to describe him is:

Extemplo Aeneae solvuntur frigore membra¹⁴¹

Immediately the limbs of Aeneas were loosened with fear

Compare this line to the second to last line of the poem, just after Aeneas has made the fatal sword stroke, when the dying Turnus is described in the following way:

¹⁴¹ *Aen.* 1.92.

. . . ast illi solvuntur frigore membra¹⁴²

But the limbs of that man were loosened with fear

This repetition frames the action of the epic, a poetic choice which draws attention to the line being drawn between the two men.¹⁴³

Another textual parallel is found in descriptions of the two heroes in the context of courtship. In Book 4, as Aeneas prepares to go on his fateful hunting trip with Dido, he is described as:

. . . ipse ante alios pucherrimus omnis¹⁴⁴

He himself most beautiful before all others

Likewise in Book 7, when the narrator describes the Italian suitors competing for the hand of Lavinia, Turnus

. . . petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis¹⁴⁵

He, most beautiful before all others, seeks . . .

The same language, then, used to describe Aeneas' surpassing beauty among all those involved in the hunt (which beauty will prove fatal to Dido) is used to describe Turnus' excellent status among the suitors. The "hunt" which begins in Book 7, with the two rival "hunters" Turnus and Aeneas trying to catch Lavinia for himself, will likewise prove fatal to one of the participants.

In a more complicated example of textual parallelism, Thomas points to the completely balanced *aristeia* of Aeneas and Turnus in lines 12.500-547, apparently the first and only double *aristeia* in all of classical epic. The passage proceeds as follows: four lines are devoted to

¹⁴² *Aen.* 12.951.

¹⁴³ Interesting as well is the similarity of the situations in which the phrase is used. Aeneas in the storm and Turnus dying on the field of battle are both victims of hostile gods. But whereas Aeneas has favoring divinities to save him, Turnus is left with no god or goddess willing or able to preserve his life.

¹⁴⁴ *Aen.* 4.141.

¹⁴⁵ *Aen.* 7.55.

Aeneas, then four for Turnus, then three for *ille* (Aeneas), then five for *hic* (Turnus). In these lines each kills five men. Then a double simile compares the heroes to forest fires and rivers, to be discussed further below, and then each man kills two opponents in alternation. Thomas notes, “Through narrative and simile, in fewer than fifty lines, Vergil has blended Aeneas and Turnus so that they have become doublets of one another, a process unprecedented even in the Achilles/Hector duality.”¹⁴⁶

In addition to these textual parallels, Vergil further underlines the connection between Turnus and Aeneas through the use of epic similes. Particularly in Book 12 particularly, as Aeneas and Turnus move inexorably towards their final showdown, paired similes appear in which both Aeneas and Turnus are each compared to identical or similar things. One example of this is the two consecutive similes at 12.521-528, in the middle of the double *aristeia* just discussed. Here Turnus and Aeneas are both compared to ruinous forces of nature. First their concurrent rampages across the battlefield are compared to two forest fires burning through the same dry forest starting on different sides, then they are compared to two flooded rivers coming down from the high mountains and rushing into the sea. There is absolutely no difference between the fires or the rivers. They are identical. Moreover as Vergil concludes the similes in lines 527-528, both men are described as filled with *ira*, and this doubling of rage emphasizes the similarity between the two men.

The next pair of similes begins with one describing Turnus at 12.684-686. Vergil compares Turnus bursting through the battle lines on his chariot to giant boulder dislodged from a mountain by a storm or erosion, bouncing and rolling down the hill and crushing forests, livestock and even people in its path. This simile is quickly balanced by another describing Aeneas at 12.701-703. Descending from the rampart to answer Turnus’ challenge, Aeneas is

¹⁴⁶ Thomas, 227.

compared to three mountains in succession: Athos, Eryx, and *pater Appenninus*, called by Putnam “the backbone of Italy.”¹⁴⁷ Here both heroes are compared to geological formations. Vergil uses the rock similes to emphasize the different fates of the two men, since Turnus’ boulder lays waste to the countryside after being thrown from its high position and for all its raging must eventually come to a stop. Aeneas, on the other hand, is a mountain unaffected by time which cannot be deposed like a boulder. No matter how destructive the boulder may be, the mountain by its very nature is the ultimate victor.

A final parallel is in the simile of the bulls at lines 12.715-722. Here Aeneas and Turnus are compared to two bulls fighting while the shepherds flee: the flocks become silent out of fear and the heifers wait quietly to see who will become regent of the grove. The bulls are locked in combat, and Vergil describes them wounding one another with their horns in gory detail as they fill the whole glade with their groaning. The equality of the bulls is evident, particularly in a phrase about the uncertainty over who will earn the right to rule the herd and mate with the heifers, *mussantque juvencae / quis nemori imperitet*.¹⁴⁸ While the previous similes of the boulder and the mountain pointed to their differing fates, Vergil here suggests that Aeneas and Turnus are equal contenders and that no one (at least among the mortal observers) could see who would come out on top. As with the similes comparing Aeneas and Turnus to fires and floods earlier in Book 12, absolutely no distinction is made between the two bulls. They may as well be identical. Thomas argues that at no other point in the poem does Vergil create such metrical balance between two warriors as he does for Aeneas and Turnus at the conclusion of this bull simile:

¹⁴⁷ Putnam, “*Aeneid* 12: Unity in Closure,” 220.

¹⁴⁸ *Aen.* 12.718-719.

non aliter Tros Aeneas et Daunius heros
concurrunt clipeis, ingens fragor aethera complet.¹⁴⁹

not otherwise do Trojan Aeneas and the Daunian hero rush together with their
shields, a huge crashing fills the air

In Book 12, the boundaries between the characters of Turnus and Aeneas become blurred to the extent that the characters begin to become confusingly identical. Vergil reinforces this in the final lines of the epic when Turnus, up to this point still in his Allecto-induced frenzy, becomes *humilis* and the usually rational Aeneas becomes *furiis accensus*. Though their fates may be different, like a falling boulder compared to a mountain, they are cut from the same stuff and with the close proximity of the allusion of Turnus-as-Aeneas (or his Iliadic self, in any case) to Aeneas killing Turnus, the whole final episode takes on a strangely self-destructive tone. For the moment it suffices to say that Vergil connects Turnus to Aeneas clearly and emphatically throughout the final book of the poem, suggesting that the differences between the two men may not be as great as they may have seemed in Book 7.

In conclusion, most of the contradictions in Vergil's characterization of Turnus also appear in Vergil's characterization of Aeneas. This suggests a complementary relationship between the two characters. Turnus and Aeneas bear even more striking similarities to each other, so that one can see that Aeneas and Turnus appear as mirror images of one another throughout the second half of the *Aeneid* and particularly in the final scene of the epic where Vergil highlights in both characters the four contradictions which we have explored in this thesis. Vergil's pairing of the characters leaves us with the same question that we were unable to answer before, about Aeneas possessed by *furor* who may be a new Achilles: is Aeneas similar to Turnus because Aeneas has incorporated all the best qualities of Turnus, while transforming his own *furor* into a weapon with which to impose order and protect his fledgling state from those

¹⁴⁹ *Aen.* 12.723-724; Thomas, 282.

who would destroy it over personal and private grievances? Or perhaps, by the end of the *Aeneid*, the violence of war has caused Aeneas to fall from the lofty ideal of founding a just, merciful and world-spanning empire and to become indistinguishable from the enemies he set out to fight. Clearly the former would support reading the *Aeneid* as Augustan propaganda, while the latter would transform the epic into a work highly critical of Roman imperialism and the autocracy of Augustus. In the end, Vergil leaves the question unanswered and leaves his readers to choose for themselves how they wish to read the contradictory characterizations of Turnus and Aeneas.

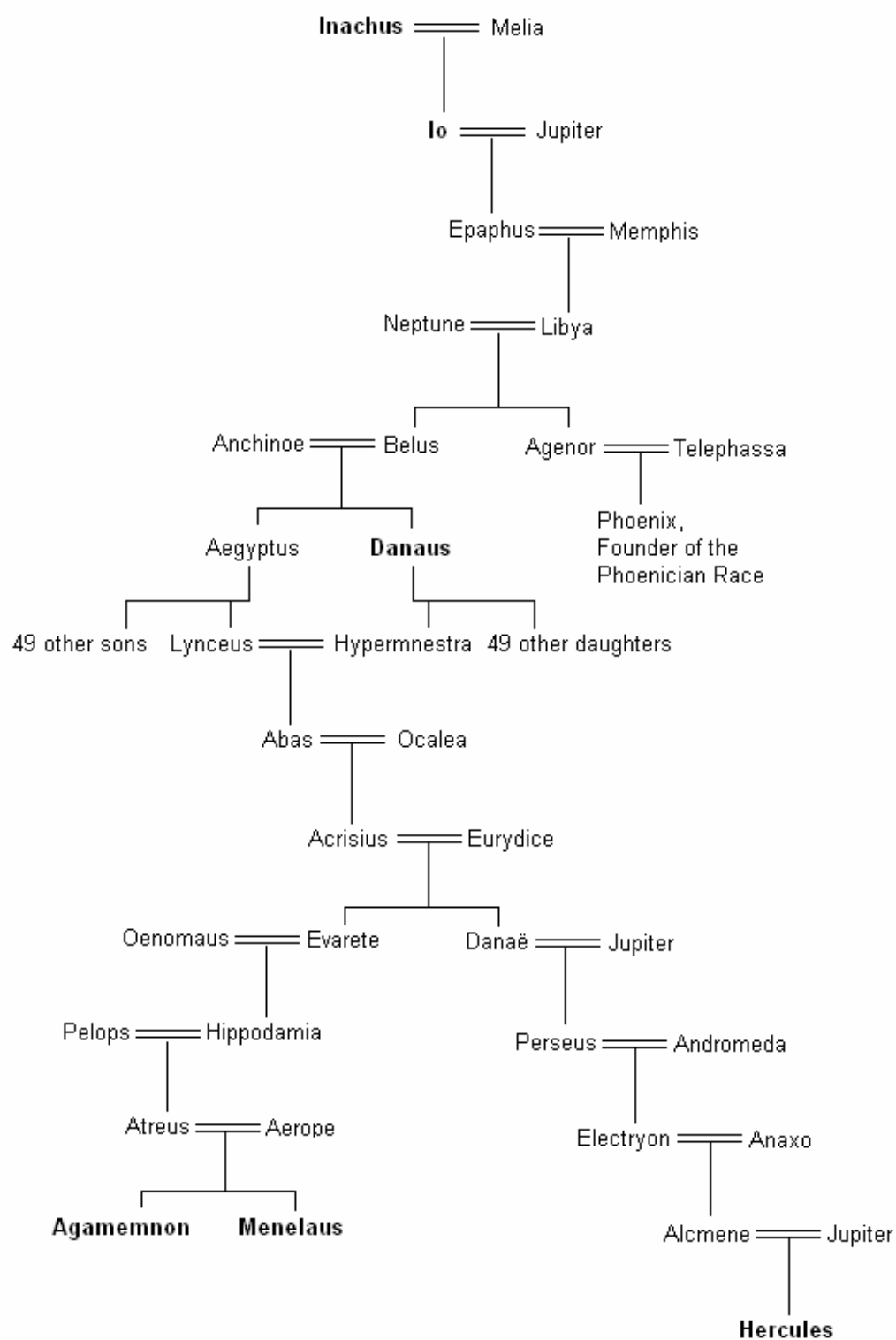


Figure 1: An Abbreviated Stemma of the Inachid family

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown how complex and problematic a character Turnus is. Given that complexity, one must wonder why such a character is in the poem at all. On a very simple level, Turnus fills the necessary role of antagonist in the second half of the *Aeneid*. But his purpose must go beyond that, since Vergil did not have to characterize a mere antagonist in such contradictory ways. As the human personification of the divine *furor* which opposes Aeneas and the foundation of the Roman race, Turnus serves as an avatar of Juno in the *Aeneid*. Turnus, a mortal with no particular proclivity to rage at the beginning of Book 7, becomes inspired with *furor* at the hands of Allecto and thereby becomes Juno's agent in the war against the Trojans. This *furor* continues to drive Turnus to strive to accomplish Juno's will (albeit without recognizing Juno as his patron) until Juno herself surrenders her *furor* to Jupiter, who then quickly strips this force from Turnus and leaves him hopelessly outmatched against Aeneas, who still enjoys divine favor. Turnus also exists in the story as a source of literary parallels, for whether Aeneas is the *alius Achilles* or the new Hector, each characterization requires a matched pair. Turnus is a fluid enough character to play both Hector to Aeneas' Achilles and vice versa, thus complementing Aeneas perfectly in literary allusions. More than just Aeneas' partner in literary allusions, however, Turnus exists in the story to provide Aeneas with a kind of mirror image. As we explored in the final chapter, Vergil uses similes, specific adjectives and allusions to show the immense similarities between Aeneas and Turnus, though the former is motivated by his pious acceptance of his destiny and the latter is driven on by *furor*. This aspect of Turnus as

a mirror image of Aeneas makes their final confrontation all the more poignant—if the main distinction drawn between Turnus and Aeneas is that of *furor* versus *pietas*, what does it mean when Aeneas sees the belt of Pallas and kills the suppliant Turnus in a rage?

My main reason for focusing specifically on four contradictions in Vergil's characterization of Turnus was that these contradictions all appear in this final scene. The duel between Aeneas and Turnus is crucial to a reading of the *Aeneid* as a whole because both pro-Augustan and anti-imperialist readings of the poem hinge upon whether Aeneas is justified in killing Turnus. As we conclude this study of the contradictions in the Turnus of the *Aeneid* we will focus on this final scene, identifying the major critical interpretations of the end of the *Aeneid* and determining how our findings in this thesis fit into that scholarly tradition.

One major school of thought in the interpretation of the final scene sees Aeneas as justified in killing Turnus. Karl Galinsky, one of the more enthusiastic adherents of this school of thought, says:

The final scene is a microcosm of the epic in that it is complex and has multiple dimensions. While several responses are possible—and that is always the attraction of a classic—it does not drift off into the grey area of moral irresolution. In the end, Aeneas has to make a decision, and clues are freely given that his impassioned action can be considered unequivocally moral.¹⁵⁰

Horsfall makes clear his disdain for what he calls “fanatic Bivocalism” (i.e. an anti-imperial reading) and “jingoistic triumphalism” (i.e. a pro-Augustan reading),¹⁵¹ but nevertheless says that “Turnus’ surrender has to be evaluated as a clever, even a dangerous piece of rhetoric and not as [a] necessarily honest and factually reliable statement,”¹⁵² and concludes that “for the reasonably acute and sensitive reader, Aeneas remains right, as he always was.”¹⁵³ Both scholars’ readings

¹⁵⁰ Galinsky, 323.

¹⁵¹ Nicholas Horsfall, ed., *A Companion to the Study of Virgil* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 216.

¹⁵² Ibid., 196.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 216.

of the end of Book 12 rest on their view that Aeneas acts morally when he kills Turnus.

Galinsky supports this view by arguing that Aeneas can justify his action on the basis of revenge for the death of Pallas and in retribution for the peace treaty broken early in Book 12.¹⁵⁴

Moreover when Horsfall calls Turnus' surrender a lie, he suggests that the visit of the Dira does not truly represent a turning point for Turnus, and that he is still the same *furor*-driven warrior as before.

On the opposite side of the debate, other scholars question whether Aeneas really does act justly when he kills Turnus. Putnam, despite seeing Turnus as an extremely negative figure, nevertheless argues against reading Aeneas' act as justified:

It is Aeneas who loses at the end of Book XII, leaving Turnus victorious in his tragedy. Aeneas fails to incorporate the ideal standards, proper for the achievement and maintenance of empire, in his struggle with the individual who embodies the emotionality of all opposition, of fallible man against infallible fate.¹⁵⁵

For Putnam, Aeneas descends to Turnus' level when he kills him and thus fails to prove that he, and thus the Roman people who follow him, are any different from those they conquer in the name of civilization.

Johnson, who reads Turnus more sympathetically than any of the above scholars, makes a similar point about the failure of Aeneas in the final lines of the poem:

The poetic and the historical necessities that insist on Rome's destiny and Turnus' doom do not require that Turnus die as he does or mean that he merits the death that he receives. For some readers, to be sure, Turnus, the villain of the piece, gets no more and no less than he deserves on the poem's final page; however, that response, that judgment, has its roots not so much in Turnus' actions or character as these are presented in the narrative as it does in feelings of the readers in question that for the poem to be successful (for these readers to be content with it) Turnus must be punished by the death that Aeneas inflicts on him. [. . .] Aeneas doesn't kill Turnus because Turnus took Pallas' sword-belt or even because Turnus killed Pallas. Aeneas kills Turnus because he, Aeneas, had failed to keep

¹⁵⁴ Galinsky, 323-325.

¹⁵⁵ Putnam, *The Poetry of the Aeneid*, 193.

his bargain with Evander, had not protected and guided his son, the novice warrior, and had allowed him to perish on his first battlefield. Aeneas is not angry with Turnus; Aeneas is angry with himself and with war itself.¹⁵⁶

Johnson, like Putnam, reads the killing of Turnus as a failure for Aeneas' supposedly superior moral system. The complexity of this final scene is apparent from the fact that the same action which Putnam and Johnson see as a failure of Aeneas' civilized morality is called "unequivocally moral" by Galinsky.

Between these two extreme views lie those who despair of proving the validity of one reading over the other and who consider the end of the *Aeneid* ambiguous. Perkell suggests as much in her introduction to *Reading Vergil's Aeneid*:

Perhaps there is no "correct" way to read the *Aeneid* or its crucial final scene, which Vergil may have left "open," undecidable. The continuing debate about the meaning of the poem suggests that it poses immensely challenging interpretive problems. Critics seek to establish a firm basis for interpretation, but such a basis seems to be elusive.¹⁵⁷

The finding of this thesis support Perkell's position. All along the way we have seen how Vergil weaves contradictions into the characterization of Turnus and highlights similar contradictions in Aeneas, and increasingly so towards the end of the epic. At every point of contradiction, however, Vergil leaves room for at least two readings: either Aeneas has successfully redefined himself as an *indiges*, a native-born hero of Italy who has bent chaotic, Achillean *furor* to serve as an instrument of civilizing *pietas*, or he proves himself in the end no different from his hated adversary and he represents merely one side in a civil war between morally indistinguishable factions. There are sufficient textual clues to support either an optimistic or pessimistic reading of the end of the *Aeneid* and our identification of key contradictions in the characterization of Turnus shows that Vergil did not craft straightforward characters. I agree with Johnson's

¹⁵⁶ Johnson, xxxvii, xlv.

¹⁵⁷ Christine Perkell, ed., *Reading Vergil's Aeneid* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 22.

statement that a scholar's reading of the death of Turnus often reveals more about the critic than it does about the text of Vergil. Civil war is full of contradictions; in order to persuade one part of a nation to fight against the other, a leader must convince those on his side that they are somehow essentially different from the other side, that they are fighting not brother against brother but against some "other." Living in a time of such paradoxes and contradictions, crafted an enigma at the end of his epic. Moral justifications and censures aside, the only thing distinguishing the epic hero from his antagonist, in the end, is that he won, and history is written by the victors.

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