

THE END OF THE AENEID

Virgil: Aeneid Book XII. Edited by RICHARD TARRANT. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. ix + 362. Hardcover, £50.00/\$90.00. ISBN 978-0-521-30881-6. Paper, £19.99/\$36.99. ISBN 978-0-521-31363-6.

The Humanness of Heroes: Studies in the Conclusion of Virgil's Aeneid. By MICHAEL PUTNAM. The Amsterdam Vergil Lectures, Volume 1. Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Distributed by the University of Chicago Press. Pp. 183. Paper, \$25.00. ISBN 978-90-8964-3476.

At last a modern commentary on Book 12 and it is excellent. The Introduction includes a timely study of Virgil's meter which shows that lines with four spondees often describe what is slow, heavy, or solemn (add "sacral"), while lines which begin with five dactyls tend to depict rapid action. I count eleven of these, two of which are lists of the Greek names of casualties, and speed is mentioned in six of the remaining nine. The case is made when the mighty 4S line 649 ends a paragraph and Saces rushes into 5D action in 650, *descendam, maiorum haud umquam indignus avorum. Vix ea fatus erat: medios volat ecce per hostes.* Another such leap from 4S to 5D occurs in 80–1. The average in the book is one 4S every 14 lines. In 896–9 there are three in four lines, as Turnus eyes a great rock. In 906 he drops it with a 5D, *tum lapis ipse viri vacuum per inane volutus.* Virgil's sweet and marvellously effective voice will not sound again but Tarrant enables us to hear it a little better.

The commentary excels for its thoroughness and sound judgment. It seems to deal with every detail of the language and offer judicious solutions amply supported by modern scholars, particularly Anglophones. There are also masses of parallel passages, making it a much larger book than previous commentaries in this series.

The Introduction includes sections on Turnus and Aeneas, the Final Scene, and Augustan Ramifications. Here Tarrant is too kind to Turnus. When the Book opens the Latins have been smashed, *infractos*, and their commander has

been absent. Turnus realizes that the time has come for him to keep his promises, and that he is being looked at meaningfully, *se signari oculis*. In 11–17 he consents to a treaty (he will later violate it). He insults his Latin comrades (who have been doing the fighting), and consents to meet Aeneas in single combat, “refuting the charge of cowardice to which the Latins had rendered themselves liable,” he says. It is Turnus who is the coward.

The aged king Latinus has to deal with this. He begins by praising Turnus’ fierce courage so unlike his own fear, *metuentem*. Tarrant takes this to hint at his lack of resolve. But Latinus is not afraid, he is deploying *conciliatio benevolentiae* to flatter Turnus for his courage by declaring his own lack of it. His speech is a masterpiece of rhetoric, and it ends with an appeal to Turnus’ aged father, the card played by Sinon in 2.87 and 138, and the fifth *locus* in the twelve under *misericordia* in *Ad Herennium* 2.47.

Turnus’ reply is rude and arrogant, and he is soon rushing into the house, asking for his horses and glorying in them, quicker than winds and white as snow. He then dons his armor, breastplate with scales of gold and aurichalc, sword, shield, and helmet with red crests in horned sockets. (There were two fire-breathing chimeras on top of it in 7.785–6.) Next he takes the sword Vulcan had made for his father Daunus, tempering the steel in water of the Styx. He then snatches a spear leaning against a column, addresses it passionately, and utters dire prophecies of what is in store for the effeminate Phrygian. Sparks fly from his face and his eyes flash fire. He is pawing the ground and goring the winds before his first (note) battle. This is a boy, not a warrior. And he has armed on the wrong day and taken the wrong sword.

Aeneas also put on his armor, given to him by his divine mother (Venus trumps Daunus), and was just as fierce, delighted to know that the truce he offered Latinus would end the war. He comforted his men and then his son (after all the boy might be about to lose his father), and told him about the great future the Fates had in store for him (“It’s not the end for you if I die”). He then ordered a deputation to take a reply to Latinus and agree the terms of the truce. This is a soldier speaking, dealing with half a dozen things in three lines. He speaks in the same military manner in 190–4 (this briskness in line 192 might raise the speedy SD score to 7 out of 9) as Virgil sounds the contrast between bluster and efficiency. Tarrant gives a full and fair account of these points, but his summary on p. 112 does not do justice to Aeneas—“Turnus is full of bustling activity and fierce emotion, while Aeneas exhibits an almost eerie calm and seeks to comfort his companions rather than to stir them up ... This is A. at his noblest, and arguably his

least interesting.” Aeneas was about to negotiate a truce and fight a duel. This was no time to stir up troops.

Tarrant is also a little unfair to Aeneas when he calls his siege of the Latin city “barbaric,” “a vindictive attack on non-combatants.” Virgil tried to protect Aeneas from such a judgment. He made it clear that Venus put the idea into her son’s mind to go to the city walls (554–5), and he immediately caught sight of the city secure and calm in the 5D, *immunem tanti belli atque impune quietem*. Then the instant he heard the name of Turnus he left the city walls. Aeneas was not vindictive but desperate to end the war.

Tarrant devotes a dozen pages to the final scene, but neither there nor in his commentary does he do justice to lines 932–4, where Turnus begs Aeneas to take pity on his old father (*fuit et tibi talis Anchises genitor*). In 10.441–3 Turnus had hunted down a young man and sent the corpse back to his father with sarcastic taunts in 10.491–4. His conduct, as detailed in Harrison’s commentary, “presents a clear contrast with that of Aeneas over Lausus ... the greatest point of contrast between the two commanders and essential for their characterization” but Tarrant does not use it. Throughout this Book Virgil sets up many contrasts between Turnus and Aeneas. Surely we need to remember that after Aeneas killed Lausus in 10.808–28, he looked at the young man’s face and thought of his own father, pitied Lausus, praised his valor, and respected his armor and his corpse.

The *Aeneid*, *inter multa alia*, praises Augustus by praising his ancestor. If Virgil had favored Turnus above Aeneas, Augustus would have seen it, and we would not be reading the *Aeneid* today. Tarrant lays stress on Aeneas’ failure to observe his father’s precept, *parcere subiectis*, in 6.853, but Anchises has just spoken 97 lines praising Roman victories (more than half of them won by his own descendants).

Julius Caesar and Augustus were both ruthless in war, but Virgil shows Aeneas being tempted to be merciful in 12.940. He is the only hero in Homer or the *Aeneid* who thinks of such a thing, but Tarrant undermines even that by suggesting that his intense anger at the sight of Pallas’ belt “is to some degree directed at himself for having let Pallas fade from his mind ... his over-identification with Pallas is a form of compensation.”

Many men beg for mercy in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*. None receives it. Why should Aeneas break the rule? War is part of epic, and in war men blaze with anger and kill.

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In Catullus 64.354 when Achilles hears that Patroclus has been killed, he mows down Trojans, *demetit*. In *Aeneid* 10.513 when Aeneas hears that Pallas has been killed, he mows down everything before him, *metit*, and Michael Putnam deduces that the savagery of Achilles is absorbed by the brutality of Aeneas. By similar lexical arguments Aeneas then becomes Achilles, and later will be Pyrrhus and Juno. The cloud of connections is at its thickest on p. 109 when “Aeneas both becomes Dido and kills her as he slays Turnus.” He has already been Turnus several times. This is no way to read.

The thrust of this book is that *Aeneid* 12 plots the descent of a man who was famous for his *pietas*, and becomes a sacker of cities, a killer of women and of a wounded man begging for mercy at his feet. (This is Aeneas’ humanness.) The premise for this is Aeneas’ failure to observe the instruction of his father Anchises in 6.853 to spare the defeated, *parcere subiectis*. Tarrant calls it a precept, and Putnam invokes it a score of times in his 133 pages. But it is not a precept without the end of the line, *et debellare superbos*. In 6.756–853 Anchises has delivered a panegyric on the victories which have made Rome ruler of the world. He was more jingoist than pacifist. In 12.324–5, when the Latins violate the truce conference and Aeneas is wounded, Turnus roars into action the moment he sees him leaving the field, *ut Aeneam cedentem ex agmine vidit ... subita spe fervidus ardet*. Anchises would have questioned his son’s sanity if he had spared such a man. Why then recommend clemency here?

At the beginning of his *Res Gestae* Augustus records that a crown was put over his door recording his Virtus, Clementia, Iustitia, Pietas. But Julius Caesar had massacred Germans as a pacification policy, and there is no conspicuous mercy from Augustus till 28 BC, after his opponents are defeated. For him too, clemency was an instrument of policy, an amnesty offered to those who had fought against him. *Parcere subiectis* was not an injunction to Roman soldiers to spare enemies wounded in battle, but part of the Augustan settlement, and Augustus’ poet is unobtrusively supporting it.

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