

BOOK REVIEW

Virgil's Double Cross: Design and Meaning in the Aeneid. By DAVID QUINT. Princeton, NJ and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2018. Pp. xxii + 218. Paperback, \$35.00. ISBN 978-0-691-17938-4.

David Quint has written a monograph about chiasmus. More specifically, he has written about chiasmus as a “master-trope” and “figure of thought” in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, one that structures the poem at receding levels from start to finish. This chiasmic approach gives the reader a sense of the *Aeneid* as a poem constructed like a Russian doll, full of ring compositions both large and small ranging from the overarching narrative, the various inset episodes, all the way down to pairs of individual lines. The hermeneutic of chiasmus enables Quint to open up new readings of the poem as it relates to itself, its Homeric predecessors and Roman history of both the recent and less recent past.

At the heart of Quint’s analysis is the way the poem repeatedly doubles back on itself, which Quint reads persuasively as a reflection of the recently concluded Roman civil wars, the fraught feelings about it and the need to rewrite it as a foreign instead of a civil conflict. Ultimately, the debate that this book intervenes in—whether one wishes to take an optimistic or pessimistic view of the *Aeneid*—is an old one, but Quint’s approach to answering it is new. Rather than aligning himself only with one school of thought, Quint argues that the answer is one of both/and instead of either/or: the *Aeneid* is both ode and palinode, both praise of the emperor and critique of the civil war that brought him to power. The proof, Quint reveals, lies in the ambivalence embodied by the poem’s obsession with chiasmus and reversals. These frequent reversals—of plot, of characterization, and of the Homeric models—allow Quint to argue that Virgil is engaging in a “tactic of immanent critique,” using the poem’s myriad reversals to point up the “discernible contradictions in the official ideology itself” (xiii).

With chiasmus as their guiding framework, the monograph’s chapters engage in a series of close readings of the poem’s individual books, devoting extensive space to all but Book 5 (discussed on pp. 109–13). Homer is never far from Quint’s (or Virgil’s) mind, nor are the traumas and triumphs of the 1st century’s

civil wars; both are critical to Quint's analysis of the poem. One of the book's great strengths, in fact, is the many new ways it sees Virgil interacting with the Homeric poems, making it a worthy companion and successor to Alessandro Barchiesi's *La traccia del modello* (1984, trans. 2015).

Quint's book opens with a lengthy preface that situates the project within the larger scholarly debate about the (anti-)propagandistic motives of the poem. The seven following chapters then tackle individual books or pairings of select books. Chapter 1 examines the chiasmic relationship of Aeneas and Turnus in Books 1 and 12. Chapter 2 traces historical and literary doubles of Pyrrhus-Neoptolemus in Books 2, 3 and 6, and Chapter 3 investigates the "Doubleness of Dido" in Book 4. Chapter 4 considers the *Heldenschau* of Book 6 as its own form of chiasmus, since the movements of the dead at the book's end reverse the natural order of things. Chapter 5 draws out the opposition between nature (and natural elements) and civilization embedded in the conflicts of Books 7 and 8. Chapter 6 unravels the resonances and reverberations of Homer's Sarpedon in the combats and deaths of Books 9–11, particularly in Book 10 (mapped out impressively on pp. 157–60). The final chapter returns to Book 12 while keeping a foot in Book 10, showing how the death of Antilochus at the hands of Memnon in the lost epic *Aethiopsis* lurks as a specter behind the deaths of Pallas and Lausus. A recurrent theme in the monograph is how Virgil continually complicates the pristine image of Aeneas/Augustus as Roman *conditor* by seeing him/them mirrored inter- and intratextually in problematic non-Roman characters like Achilles, Turnus, and Memnon. Thus, with the return to Book 12 at the end, the monograph itself enacts a chiasmus, doubling back and doubling down on its ambivalent reading of the poem.

If I were to offer one criticism, it would be this: perhaps because so many of the chapters have appeared earlier in different forms (based on the acknowledgements, it seems that only Chapters 4 and 7 are brand new), the bibliography appears to have been minimally updated. As a result, there are some glaring omissions. Chapters 1 and 7, for example, which examine Book 12 at length, do not cite or engage with Richard Tarrant's 2012 commentary on the book (Cambridge University Press), which offers up a lengthy and thought-provoking discussion of the poem's final scene. Memory features in several places throughout the work, and memory has been a hot topic in Virgilian (and Classical) scholarship in the last decade, but not much of that scholarship seems to have registered. Much of the bibliography is filled with foundational works of scholarship written by the discipline's best and most revered, but a great deal of recent scholarship

seems to have been sidelined or neglected, giving a skewed sense of the state of the field.

Make no mistake, however: this is a superb book and rightfully belongs on the shelf of any serious Virgilian scholar. Every chapter offers something new, and it has enriched my understanding of the poem immensely.

MATTHEW P. LOAR

University of Nebraska–Lincoln, mloar2@unl.edu