

BOOK REVIEW

Juno's Aeneid: A Battle for Heroic Identity. By JOSEPH FARRELL. Princeton, NJ and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2021. Pp. xvii + 360. Hardback, \$47.00. ISBN: 978-0-691-21116-9.

Study of the *Aeneid*'s profound and pervasive interplay with other texts—especially the foundational epics of Homer—has been a mainstay of criticism from the poem's earliest commentators. A new entry in this long tradition, Farrell's impressive volume offers a novel perspective on Vergil's engagement with Homer, furnishing an approach that adds new complexity to old questions and yields plentiful insights in return. *Juno's Aeneid* lies at the intersection of two interpretive frameworks: first, the epic's intertextuality, primarily with Homer but including other texts that intervene in the *Aeneid*'s core dialogue with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; and second, the ancient ethical schema of kingship theory, through which Aeneas may be evaluated as a "good" or "bad" king. Taking inspiration from Francis Cairns' application of kingship theory to the *Aeneid* (*Virgil's Augustan Epic*, 1989), Farrell taps a rich vein in combining that framing with the poem's formative Homeric intertexts, re-examined within the philosophical tradition that identified Odysseus as a paradigmatic "good king" and Achilles as the opposite. The "battle for heroic identity" promised in this book's title reflects its main line of inquiry: whether, as its narrative unfolds, the *Aeneid* is to be an *Iliad* or an *Odyssey* and, consequently, whether we read Aeneas himself as an Odyssean good king or an Achillean bad one.

As the *Aeneid*'s twelve books unfold, this "battle" plays out in tension among the multiple narrative voices that shape the outcome, predominantly those of Juno, the narrator and the heroic protagonist. This study's use of intertextuality is highly dynamic, probing the *Aeneid*'s systemic allusions to Homer as an active process of narrative construction that continually shapes the story in the direction of an Iliadic or Odyssean tale. Tracing the threads of these metapoetic forces, Farrell foregrounds the creative role of the fictive actors inside the epic. From her first speech, Juno willfully "dissents" from an emergent Odyssean narrative, pushing to recast Aeneas' voyage as part of a "long *Iliad*" instead, a sequel to the

Trojans' traumatic defeat and their city's destruction. Aeneas, for his part, must determine which kind of hero he's going to be, a decision weighted by his personal experience of the *Iliad* (which he has "read") but also by his ignorance of the *Odyssey*, a story in which he has not participated. Farrell's evidence, rigorously marshalled throughout, assembles a compelling model of an epic-in-the-making, inflected at each turn through the choices of its characters and the allusive networks those choices engage.

After an introduction that sets the agenda and elaborates its scholarly antecedents in the study of Vergilian intertextuality (principally Knauer, Barchiesi, Dekel and Nelis) and kingship theory (principally Cairns), Farrell's close study of the poem begins in earnest in the first chapter, which focuses on specific theaters in *Aeneid* 1 of the metapoetic contest between an Iliadic and Odyssean master narrative. At the center of this Homeric tug-of-war is Juno's transgressive "interruption" of the narrator's incipient *Odyssey* by rousing narrative specters of the *Iliad*; her "displacement" of Odyssean elements extends to Aeneas himself, who is shown to be not unlike Juno in his "strongly Iliadic obsession" (71) with the memory of Troy, and figures like Dido epitomize a "fragmented" intertextuality resulting from this narrative power struggle.

Chapter 2 calls attention to the interpretive dichotomy of *Iliad* or *Odyssey* on which the book has so far relied and investigates a series of "third ways:" narrative patterns drawn from other intertextual sources "that might have allowed Aeneas to escape from or surpass the Homeric binary" (116). Put to the test are the Epic Cycle, the *Argonautica*, the heroic model of Hercules, Greek tragedy and Roman historical epic—each of which grounds a vibrant discussion, but, in the final analysis, fails to offer an alternative to the bedrock Iliadic/Odyssean binary for Aeneas and his epic. The third and final chapter zeroes in on Aeneas' personal journey, illuminating the broader question of the *Aeneid's* Homeric identity through examining which kind of hero the protagonist will become. An excellent study of Aeneas' intentions and actions throughout the twelve books unfolds here, setting the character's "heroic education" in conversation with intertextual gestures to the ethics of an Odysseus or an Achilles—and the model of the latter appears to prevail.

Juno's Aeneid is a landmark work that should be essential reading on Vergil's relation to Homer; its meticulous demonstration of the *Iliad's* abiding influence in the *Aeneid*, alongside the more familiar Odyssean paradigm, is especially valuable. Though satisfying within its own scope, Farrell's study offers glimpses of ideas treated briefly here but worth deeper exploration in the future—for example, the

broader ramifications of reading Aeneas, a literary avatar of Augustus, as a “bad king” in the mold of the wrathful, inflexible Achilles. The volume is handsomely produced, notwithstanding the occasional, non-intrusive typo. A further, notable virtue of this book is its prioritization of the individual reader’s experience, positioning its argumentation not as a decisively authoritative voice, but as a guide to opening new ways for readers to encounter the *Aeneid*. While Farrell sets out cogent evidence for the poem’s Iliadic character, the interpretive pluralism that epitomizes Vergil’s literary art is dutifully respected, from the first to the final page; in this, the author shows himself not only a masterly reader of Vergil, but a reader after Vergil’s own heart.

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